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ABSTRACT

This report focuses on the flow of trainees and the financing of the training schemes for adult continuing vocational education in Belgium. Because of lack of time and the complex nature of vocational education in the country, only preliminary results are reported. The first three chapters of the report describe training as it exists now. The first chapter discusses three types of vocational training: social advancement training, apprenticeships, and training schemes organized by the national employment office. It also covers two other types of training--evening courses offered by universities, and private courses. Chapter 2 examines training which has been organized by industry, often in collaboration with trade unions, based on data gathered by six exploratory investigations divided between industrial and tertiary sectors. The third chapter describes the measures introduced recently to combat unemployment. The final chapter puts forward a number of questions for discussion, such as: What are the problems of this nebulous educational area? How are they intertwined? and What should be done to obtain better information in order to take action? (KC)

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CEDEFOP Document

The financing of continuing vocational training in Belgium

European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training

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The financing of continuing vocational training in Belgium

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CEDEFOP PREFACE

Following the studies conducted on the financing of initial training in Belgium, Denmark, Federal Republic of Germany, France, Ireland, United Kingdom and Netherlands (published in 1982) and in Portugal and Spain in 1988, CEDEFOP launched a series of studies in 1988 on the financing of continuing training (FOCUS II) in Belgium, Denmark, Spain, Federal Republic of Germany, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, United Kingdom, Netherlands and Portugal.

Any analysis of continuing training raises complex problems, particularly because:

- the boundary between initial and continuing training is very difficult to establish. Many continuing vocational training schemes take the form, for example, of initial training or remedial training for certain target groups;

- the field of continuing training often covers a variety of schemes connected with the labour market or other schemes within and outside enterprise which are sometimes difficult to apprehend and describe and which, in any case, cannot be brought within an organized system (as in the case of initial training);

- the word "training" can be understood in different ways. For example, is a seminar informing employees about Community programmes necessarily perceived as training? The answer is probably no, even though attendance at this seminar entails costs (loss of productivity) which have to be accounted for and it may well be felt that this is training;

- continuing training schemes are often supported by mixed funding; this type of funding is not always clear. For example, how and where can one account for the free time which people spend on training organized by their firms half of which takes place

during working hours and half outside working hours? Where and how does one include State-funded schemes which people attend during their free time, sometimes at the "suggestion" of their firms?

- enterprise does not always declare its expenditure on training. For example, firms are hesitant to declare expenditure above certain limits because this might set a precedent for the future; in other cases expenditure on training may be included under the heading "acquisition of materials". Moreover, the expenditure on training which is declared does not always include certain indirect costs - loss of productivity, replacement costs, etc.

These and other difficulties encountered by the authors of the studies still persist despite CEDEFOP's efforts to provide a clear picture in the FOCUS II studies - it should be borne in mind that these studies are based on the information available in the Member States and that the existing information resources raise a certain number of problems which have yet to be resolved.

Overall, however, the studies provide considerable clarification especially as regards the information available in the Member States on this subject, as well as on a number of basic questions which any analysis of continuing training must take into account. The studies should therefore be seen as a starting point providing pointers for further work to be conducted in the future within the Community rather than as a finished and sufficient work.

REVIEW OF THE QUESTIONS RAISED BY THE STUDIES:

1. **Definitions, concepts**

The concept of continuing training encompasses different areas in each Member State which are discussed in a whole range of terminology.

Not all these differences are merely semantic - in most cases, they are due to complex situations encompassing a range of circumstances which are difficult to categorize. For instance, the boundary between education and vocational training is not clear-cut in most Member States; the same applies to the boundary between initial and continuing training.

The FOCUS II studies provide a great deal of (but not exhaustive) basic information on what is considered to be continuing training in each Member State. For comparison purposes, however, it is important to use this basic information as a starting point for agreeing on concepts and definitions at Community level.

2. **Information sources**

While there is now a system of information at national and Community level making it possible to collect reliable data on education (even though comparability problems still exist today), the gaps are still too great in vocational training. If this is true of "organized" and institutionalized vocational training, these gaps become much greater for types of training which are "not explicitly organized" and are closer to on-the-job training whose growing importance cannot be disregarded.

The question of information on continuing training cannot be seen, however, solely in terms of a lack of information. Even when such information is available (it should not be forgotten that some Member States already have a considerable volume of information available), problems of comparability and links between sources complicate the task of systematic gathering of reliable and comparable data.

Finally, the problem of centralization/decentralization may mean that information is broken down into small batches and may lead to major gaps if there is no central authority gathering information at national level.

All these questions have raised problems both as regards the volume of information supplied and the extent to which this information is reliable and comparable. An inventory of the main information sources has however been drawn up in the FOCUS II studies and provides a very good starting point for future work.

3. Information gathering

An analysis of continuing training can focus on a number of factors:

- Funding instruments

  An analysis of funding instruments provides essential information through which the continuing training schemes which these instruments are intended to support, as well as the people who benefit from them, can be located. This approach may, however, raise some basic questions. For instance, in cases where there are statutory obligations, an analysis of funding instruments makes it possible only to pinpoint the continuing training encompassed by these instruments with the result that any activities taking place outside them may be overlooked.

- People in training

  The same course may be attended by people acquiring their initial training and others attending the course for continuing training purposes. The boundary between a continuing training and an initial training scheme can thus be determined by the particular circumstances of individuals.

  This approach is a necessary starting point for locating initial and continuing training schemes. However, it makes it possible to include only part of continuing training.

- Institutions providing training

  The institutions responsible for initial and continuing training traditionally differ from one another. Enterprise and its associated organizations are in any case playing a leading role in the supply of continuing training services.

  The approach of those institutions responsible for continuing training is undoubtedly of help in characterizing the schemes in question. It does not, however, encompass the whole of the continuing training field and tends to exclude the movement away from institutionalized training currently taking place in enterprise with the development of "non-formalized training" linked to working situations.

Whatever the starting point, there is little doubt that each of these analyses will provide different results. An overall picture through which the dynamics of continuing training can be comprehended will have to be based on a combination of these different approaches.

The FOCUS II studies offer a general panorama making it possible to locate the potential information available for these different approaches and the existing gaps. This has not, however, prevented the authors of the studies, as a result of the different information systems in the various Member States, approaching the subject from different starting points which have conditioned the findings of the studies and their interpretation.

4. **Knowledge gained**

All the studies provide figures on continuing training expenditure - more detailed for the public sector, less detailed as regards expenditure by enterprise and even less detailed as regards household expenditure. Although there are aggregate figures for expenditure by enterprise in some Member States (even though these figures are not necessarily comparable), the figures for other Member States are only

partial - only three sectors were surveyed in Belgium; the survey covered 4000 large, medium-sized and small firms in Portugal. In other cases, information is provided on enterprise only when the public authorities have taken some kind of action (for instance Spain).

In these circumstances it is evident that any generalization is unwarranted and risky.

Moreover, none of the studies provide a detailed analysis of the mechanisms and volume of re-financing.

It needs to be stressed that the studies must be re-located in their original contexts - initial financing in some cases, final financing in others (France), institutions in others (Denmark) and an integrated approach in others - for an interpretation of their findings. These differences have affected the nature of the figures and, obviously, their interpretation, despite CEDEFOP's endeavours to formulate a precise specification providing for the collection of information at all levels - which was probably overly ambitious.

In any case, the lack of adequate statistical resources has led some authors to fill in the gaps with estimates and calculations, while others have based their figures on preliminary research work and others on official information sources.

This information on training expenditure cannot, however, be interpreted in an isolated way. While it can be seen, for instance, from all the studies that expenditure by enterprise is increasing, this does not provide any indication of the nature and effects of this investment as regards enterprise itself or the people benefiting from it - the type and length of the training, among other things, need to be known as well as its distribution and consequences. This a further area in which the nature and the volume of information available in the FOCUS II studies differs for the reasons discussed above.

Any attempt at comparison in these circumstances is very risky and it is difficult to pinpoint the ways in which the various information is inter-related - these inter-relations play an essential role in any interpretation of the figures.

The questions which we have raised are no more than examples of a more general set of questions which has to be used as a starting point for any attempt to analyse continuing training. We feel, however, that the FOCUS II studies provide a data base which will help to stimulate this overall reflection through the answers which it sketches out.

Considerable practical work remains to be carried out at national and Community levels and we hope that this contribution, however modest it may be, is able to provide some pointers.

Our thanks go to all the authors who have contributed, through their work and their participation in working groups, to progress with the problems surrounding "continuing training" which is, it should be borne in mind, still a very young subject.

Georges Dupont

Fernanda Reis

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I should like to express my warmest thanks to those involved in continuing training activities in a great many different places who devoted their time to providing me with information and giving their comments.

In particular, several parts of this study were made possible by the kindly and efficient cooperation of a number of officials of the Ministry of Labour and Employment.

I should also like to thank CEDEFOP for giving me the opportunity to conduct this exploratory research work, while expressing the hope that this paper will prompt the development of the educational project which Belgium so badly needs.

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INTRODUCTION

Continuing training forms part of a country's education system. Its aim, as defined by CEDEFOP, is essentially vocational; it must be closely linked to the labour market and must prepare trainees for the exercise of an occupation or aid their vocational advancement. The expression "continuing" implies that this type of training does not form part of compulsory schooling, initial training or their direct continuation; as a general rule, there must be an interval between the completion of education in this sense and the various forms of continuing training. It follows that no age limits apply to continuing training.

These two criteria define, in principle, the field covered by this report. It will focus on two aspects: the flow of trainees and the financing of the training schemes.

All concerned - including CEDEFOP - will be aware that the preparation of a study of this kind comes up against difficulties which are often insurmountable; the report can only claim to be exploratory in nature. This is especially so in the case of Belgium, where statistical data is poor or chaotic and the institutional machinery is complex, fragmented and constantly evolving.

Given these conditions, even the outline to be adopted for the report was by no means self-evident. In the end, having in mind the report we prepared in 1984 (Le financement de la formation professionnelle en Belgique - The financing of vocational training in Belgium), we adopted a plan based on the origin of the respective

training schemes. This has the drawback of presenting very diverse institutions simultaneously: to enable the reader to find his way through this material, a "map" is given on the following page. On the left we find the national education system and next to it the various continuing training schemes, while on the right, industry appears, together with its related schemes. In the centre we find the Office national de l'Emploi (National Employment Office - ONEM). Below, sundry aspects of provision are cited.

The first chapter discusses three types of vocational training which, while they may not constitute continuing training, have been in existence for some time in Belgium.

1.1 Social advancement training. Typically this involves evening or weekend courses organized by vocational or technical schools. The courses constitute continuing but not necessarily vocational training in the strict sense since they also have a cultural objective.

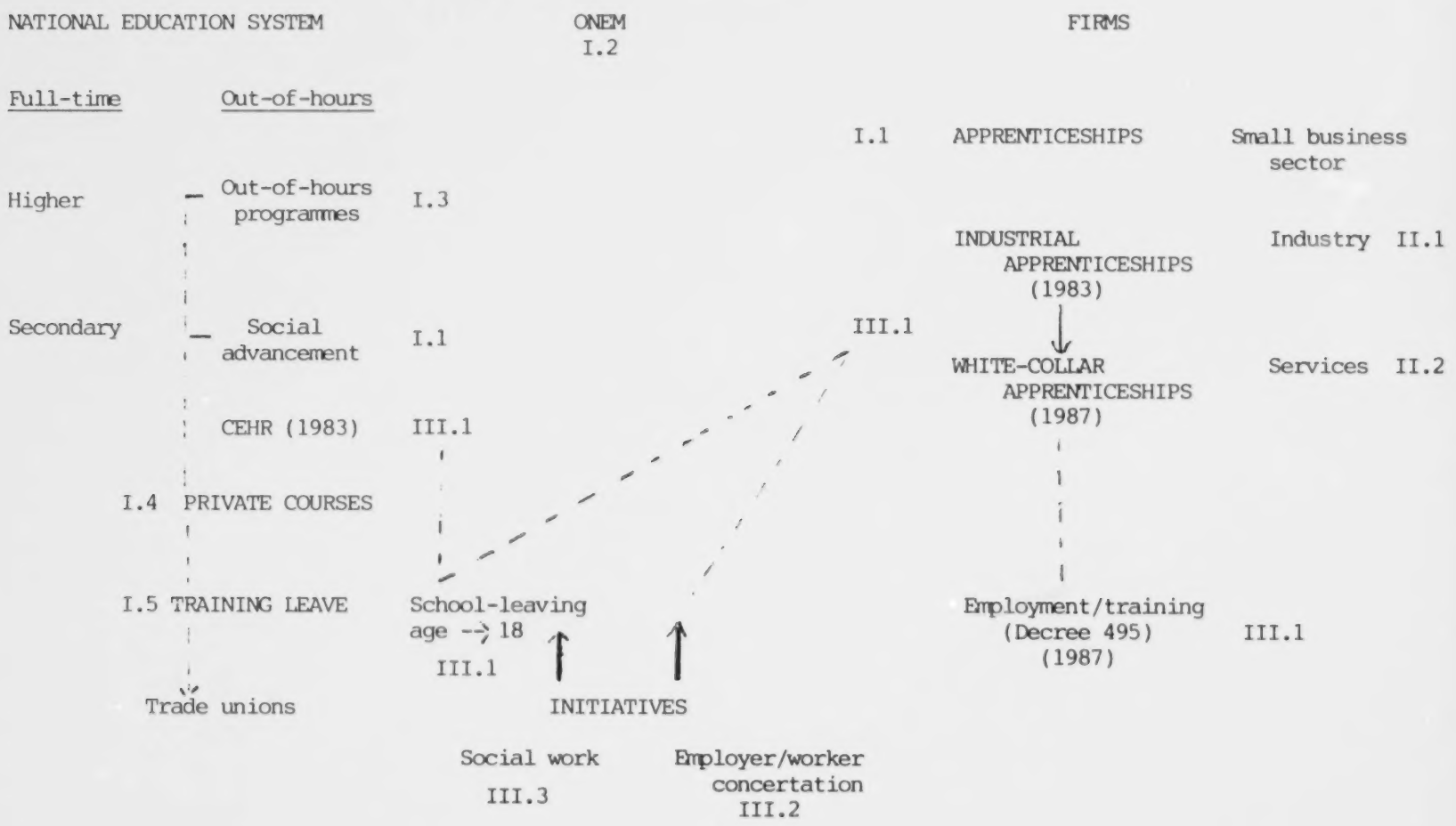
1.2 Apprenticeships organized within the small business sector and aimed at certain occupations in crafts and commerce. This constitutes vocational but not generally continuing training since it is aimed primarily at young people and is a direct continuation of their schooling.

The foregoing two types of training, which are not - or only partly - within the scope of this report and, in addition, were examined in the preceding report, will only be touched on here. On the other hand, the third traditional type of training, referred to below, will be examined at greater length - especially as regards recent developments in relation to earlier trends.

2. Training schemes organized by the Office national de l'Emploi (National Employment Office) (ONEM), which typically constitute both vocational and continuing training.

The first chapter also covers two types of training which are in many ways very similar but were not examined in the preceding report.

CONTINUING TRAINING STRUCTURES



3. The evening courses developed by the universities and higher education centres. These courses offer continuing and vocational training, provided the term "vocational" is understood in a broader sense.

4. Private courses. These courses - for example language, secretarial or data-processing courses - are offered by private, fee-charging institutions.

The chapter ends with a discussion of a system designed to facilitate access to continuing training, involving absence from work to follow a training course without loss of pay (congé-éducation payé - paid training leave, formerly crédit d'heure - time credits).

Chapter Two examines the other end of the spectrum of continuing vocational training: training organized by industry, often in collaboration with trade unions at sectoral level. This is clearly the least well known area and no overall statistics are available. Six exploratory investigations were carried out, divided between industrial and tertiary sectors.

The third chapter describes the measures - very heterogeneous in nature - introduced or developed recently. These measures all have a common purpose: i.e., to find remedies, or at least palliatives, for the phenomenon of unemployment - especially youth unemployment, long-term unemployment and the consequent social exclusion. These measures overlap the boundaries of the earlier chapters. They derive partly from the prolongation of compulsory schooling introduced in 1983 and comprise innovations within the school system (part-time education centres), developments based on existing schemes (industrial apprenticeships) and measures based on a variety of initiatives (e.g. government, the two sides of industry, social action, etc.).

The first three chapters explore a little-known territory. The final chapter, despite the remaining uncertainties, puts forward a number of questions for discussion: in what way are the problems of this nebulous area intertwined? What should be done to obtain better information with a view to taking action?

CHAPTER I TRADITIONAL FORMS

Before examining the most typical form of continuing vocational training (that provided by the ONEM), besides newer or differing forms, we shall briefly describe two traditional forms of training, assessing their respective importance.

1. Social advancement courses

These courses are vocational and technical training programmes given outside the full-time training system, i.e., in the evenings or at weekends. This is an important sector since it constitutes an attempt by the national education system to respond to individualized demand.

The courses are organized by the various networks making up the supposedly national education system in Belgium: the "free" network, mainly catholic, and the "official" networks (central, provincial and local authorities), all financed essentially by the State. The adjective "national" is hardly fitting since education in Belgium is organized independently by the French and Flemish-speaking communities, while the constitutional reform now under way (1988) will bring about a full division of the education system along linguistic lines.

Already today social advancement courses are organized differently in the two communities and the national statistical system is no longer in a position to provide an overall picture.

Consequently, the figures presented later on are very coarse estimates. In addition, it is impossible to provide a breakdown showing the share devoted to vocational training.

It should be noted that social advancement education is intended to overstep the strict boundaries of job-related training and offer possibilities for cultural development to the population as a whole. In addition, these courses are followed by trainees of all ages, even though under-25s account for half their number.

In terms of the numbers enrolled, social advancement courses are well ahead of all other types of continuing training (see Table 1.1), accounting for the equivalent of 8% of the total number of full-time pupils and students (at all levels, from nursery school to university) or 5% of the entire working population; this corresponds to eight times the total number of trainees involved in small business sector or ONEM activities.

However, a look at the respective budgets (very approximate, of course) shows the foregoing comparison in a somewhat different light. While the overall budget for social advancement courses exceeds that for the other two forms of training referred to, the expenditure per person is the smallest, corresponding to 17% of the annual cost of a pupil in full-time secondary education. This average covers very many programmes limited to a small number of courses, but also a certain number of more extensive operations.

It may be noted that enrolments for social advancement courses have been rising strongly, especially since 1977 (see our previous report, page 42).

Table I.1 Comparative figures for various types of training

	1970	1980	Trend	Comparative figures (%), 1980
A. Number of pupils and trainees (thousands)				
0. School system				
1. Social advancement				
2. Apprentices (small business sector)				
3. ONEM				
B. Volume of expenditure (BF million)				
0. School system				
1. Social advancement				
2. Apprentices (small business sector)				
3. ONEM				
C. Expenditure per person (estimates)				
0. School system[1]				
1. Social advancement				
2. Apprentices (small business sector)				
3. ONEM (excluding unemployment benefit)				

[1]Base 100 in the last column is derived from expenditure per head at secondary level in the school system.

2. Apprenticeships in the small business sector

Strictly speaking, apprenticeships do not come under the heading of continuing training since the system concerns young people on completion of their schooling. Trainees learn a trade under the guidance of an employer for 32 hours per week, while attending 4 hours of general education courses and 4 hours of vocational courses.

The trades involved concern twenty or so sectors and trainees are apprenticed to self-employed tradesmen (e.g. butchers, bakers, etc.) or small businesses.

Following the prolongation of compulsory schooling to age 18 in 1983, apprenticeships were recognized as equivalent to compulsory education and industrial apprenticeships were introduced on the basis of the earlier model, the system being later extended to salaried occupations in general. Indirectly, therefore, apprenticeships form part of the efforts being made to develop participation in vocational training among young people unable to find a place in full-time training courses.

Despite its limited field of application, this system involves substantial numbers of trainees: the number of apprenticeship contracts in effect every year is of the same order of magnitude (1980) as the number of trainees enrolled in ONEM programmes, which cover the entire range of economic activity. However, the budget for this sector, deriving from funds allocated by the communities, is much smaller than that of the ONEM, reflecting the much smaller proportion of classroom training involved.

From 1970 to 1974, the number of apprenticeships was in decline; however, since the crisis it has risen appreciably, falling off once more since 1980.

3. Comparisons

By comparison with the first two types of training described, the ONEM courses differ in two ways.

Firstly, the expenditure per person trained is high: BF 76 000 as against BF 23 000 or 30 000. In arriving at this estimate, unemployment benefit and training allowance payments - i.e., about half the total - were deducted from ONEM's budget. Even so, the cost

of ONEM training corresponds to more than half the annual costs of a pupil in secondary education (about BF 135 000). This illustrates the importance of the ONEM system, which provides continuing vocational training in the full sense of the term.

In addition, the number of trainees has risen considerably, more than doubling in ten years, while the overall budget is also rising strongly. From 1970 to 1980, expenditure per trainee grew at a rate similar to that for apprentices or the average for pupils in the national education system. This trend will now be examined in greater detail.

2. The ONEM's training activities

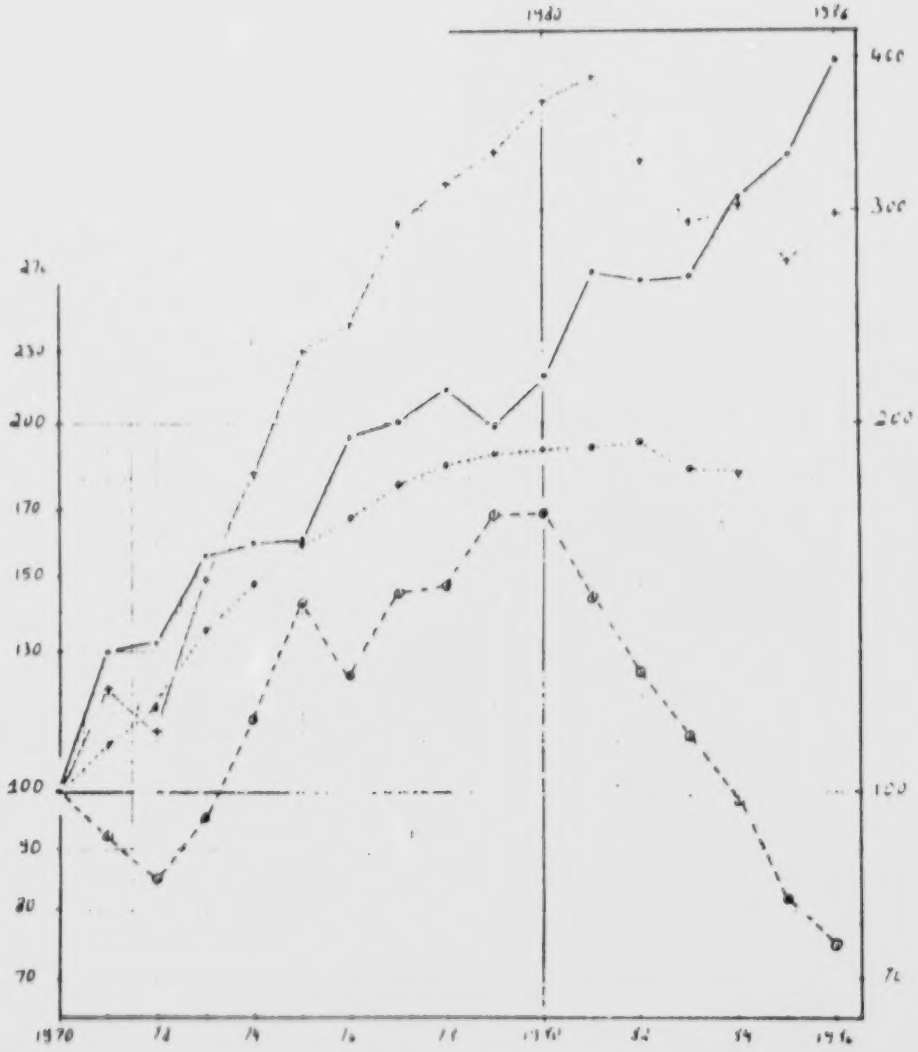
2.1 Recent trends

In our previous report we noted a sharp reduction in expenditure in real terms (i.e., at constant prices) per person trained during the two most recent years for which statistics were available (1981 and 1982), in marked contrast with the rising trend observed from 1972.

Graph I.1 covers the period up to 1986 and shows an abrupt reversal of the trend in this parameter; this does not apply to the trend in the number of persons completing training during the year in which a strong rise has been maintained since 1970 (over sixteen years, this figure has increased by a factor of four). However, the overall budget has not followed suit; up to 1981 it rose steadily, at a rate appreciably higher than that for the overall national education budget. It then fell off in 1982 and 1983, steadying subsequently (figures are at constant prices).

Given the constantly rising number of trainees, the contraction in budget resources has led to the curve seen in the lower part of the graph: expenditure per trainee has been in a sharp downtrend since 1980, falling by 25% in relation to its 1970 level in the course of six years.

number of trainees and expenditure (at constant prices)



Number of persons trained

Total expenditure

National education budget (as reference)

Expenditure per trainee

Of course it may always happen that the headings in the ONEM annual report will not fully correspond over a period of time as a result of legislative or administrative changes; indeed, the figure given for 1986 was adjusted to offset a decline thought to be artificial. However, even when the figures are re-calculated on a different basis (see below), a similar trend over time is obtained.

ONEM headings used for calculation

The figures for expenditure on which Graph I.2 is based are drawn from three headings under the "operational classification" given in Table 25 h 1 and 2, Annual Report 1986.

- Vocational training: BF 3 852 143 000
- Financial aid for the establishment, expansion or conversion of enterprises: BF 189 272 000
- Unemployment benefit paid to trainees enrolled in vocational training courses: BF 8 670 000.

The figure under this last heading is well down on 1985: we therefore adjusted it in line with the trend in the number of trainees, bringing it up to BF 242 000 000.

If the entire statistical series from 1970 onwards were to be calculated on the basis of the first heading only it would yield a similar curve to that shown in the graph, reaching index 180 in 1979, holding almost steady in 1980 (178.5) and falling strongly thereafter to index 73.3 in 1986.

2.2 Expansion of supplementary training

To attempt to identify the origin of this trend, the various types of ONEM training were divided into three categories:

- basic training
- supplementary training
- other.

This latter heading covers a wide variety of activities:

- other types of training in centres run by the ONEM
- training in centres set up in cooperation with firms
- training courses subsidized by the ONEM
- aid for the establishment, extension or conversion of enterprises
- special youth centres (observation and guidance).

Table I.2 Relative trends in the three categories of ONEM training

	Total	Number of persons trained			As % of total		
		basic	supplementary	other	basic	supplementary	other
1978	23.928	7.668	1.184	15.076	32.0	5.0	63.0
1979	22.283	7.438	1.649	13.196	33.4	7.4	59.2
1980	24.561	7.550	1.959	15.052	30.7	8.0	61.3
1981	30.032	8.503	5.897	15.632	28.3	19.6	52.1
1982	29.466	5.552	10.056	13.858	18.8	34.1	47.1
1983	29.722	8.005	10.710	11.007	26.9	36.0	37.1
1984	34.508	7.527	13.932	13.049	21.8	40.4	37.8
1985	37.354	8.251	16.900	12.203	22.1	45.2	32.7
1986	44.768	9.761	20.807	14.200	21.8	46.5	31.7
Trend 1978-86	+ 20.840	+ 2.093	+ 19.623	- 876			

The rise in the number of persons trained since 1978 derives essentially from the expansion of supplementary training; basic training shows a more modest rise, while "other" shows little change. These diverging trends in absolute terms have led to a radical change in the relative weights of the categories of ONEM training, especially since 1981. By 1986, almost half ONEM's training activities concerned supplementary training, which accounted for only 5% of the total in 1978. The share of "other" types of training has fallen by half while that of basic training has declined from 32% to a mere 22% of the total.

Clearly there has been a change of policy: to identify it, we shall now examine the subject in relation to the respective linguistic communities, since it is here that the ONEM's training activities are mainly determined.

2.3 Differences between the linguistic communities

Table 8.3 clearly illustrates the difficulty of viewing Belgium as a single entity as regards vocational training.

Table 8.3 ONEM training activities: breakdown by linguistic community (1986)

	Flemish-speaking community		French-speaking community		Belgium[1]	
	number	%	number	%	number	%
Persons in training						
basic	5.362	16.9	4.327	33.2	9.761	21.8
supplementary	18.750	59.2	2.052	15.7	20.807	46.5
other	7.539	23.9	6.654	51.1	14.200	31.7
Total	31.651	100.0	13.033	100.0	44.768	100.0
Budget resources (BF million)	1.810,9		1.879,5		3.726,9	
Expenditure per person training (BF thousand)	57.2		144.2		83.3	

[1] Including the German-speaking community (84 persons in training, budget BF 36.4 million).

Firstly, it will be seen that the predominance of supplementary training relates only to the Flemish community and not at all to the French. In the French community "other" types of training predominate, while the share of basic training is also larger than in the Flemish community.

Secondly, the absolute figures are surprising when it is recalled that the Flemish-speaking regions account for only 51% of the unemployed; by contrast, the Flemish community accounts for 70% of all persons trained by the ONEM. On the other hand, a look at the budget figures shows that the Flemish community accounts for less than 49% of the total; this implies that expenditure per trainee differs.

In fact, the contrast is striking: expenditure per person trained in Wallonia is 2.5 times that in the Flemish-speaking community.

It must be concluded that two very different policies exist regarding the role to be played by the employment office. However, the efforts devoted to continuing training in Belgium appear in a different light according to whether reference is made to the number of trainees or the budget. From the financial viewpoint, progress has been more modest. During the second crisis period - beginning in 1981 - the financial resources devoted to this sector not only ceased to grow but actually fell off; in real terms, this decline amounted to 23% over five years (from 1981 to 1986), while the number of trainees rose by 49%.

2.4 Tentative interpretation

A recent doctoral thesis in sociology puts forward various elements for the interpretation of trends in continuing training policies, especially in the French-speaking community.[1]
Christian Maroy recalls that from their inception in the 1950s the ONEM's adult vocational training activities were focused on two objectives:

- an economic objective: i.e. to meet the need for manpower of individual firms and the economy as a whole;
- a "social" objective: to facilitate the reintegration of the unemployed into the labour market and contribute to the workers' vocational advancement.

With the rise of unemployment in the mid-70s, training activities were both expanded and diversified. Originally, the ONEM's activities had been aimed primarily at manual workers and industrial occupations; it first diversified into the

[1] Christian Maroy, Formation professionnelle et professionnels de la formation, Genèse d'un champ et conflits pédagogiques au sein de la formation professionnelle des adultes de l'ONEM, Department of Sociology, Louvain-la-Neuve, 1988.

tertiary sector and white-collar occupations, therefore, using a team of instructors with a more intellectual background. Further diversification grew out of the desire to combat the rising phenomenon of social exclusion among the young and/or long-term unemployed. This desire, shared by the team of instructors involved, led to the development of very specific types of training given in vocational guidance and preparation centres (COISP), where social objectives are given priority over purely economic aims. Thus, the expansion of the ONEM's training activities was accompanied not only by diversification, but also by some degree of dissociation - and even conflict - between the two objectives referred to above.

The economic objective tends to favour types of training which lead rapidly to a job and consequently to give preference to "economic" criteria - such as placement rates - in evaluating training operations. Programmes will be aimed primarily at persons of a relatively high educational level, and at workers rather than the unemployed - especially the long-term unemployed.

This emphasis on the economic objective helps to explain the growing share of short training courses in the Flemish-speaking community, or "other" forms of training in the French community; it should be noted that this last category covers all training activities carried out in close contact with employers.

However, the persistence of severe under-employment, with young people and the less well trained being the worst-hit categories, led to the identification of a particular need for training - or rather, primarily, for social reintegration - which often called for something other than supplementary training or training linked to an immediate need for qualified manpower on the part of industry. The decline in the share of basic training suggests that this objective has not been resolutely pursued, despite some original operations to which we shall return in Chapter III.

3. University level training given outside normal hours

In the past, the expression "evening courses" usually meant vocational or technical training corresponding to full-time training at lower or upper secondary level; this is effectively the field covered by social advancement courses.

With the very appreciable improvement in the general level of education in the 1960s facilities for continuing studies while exercising an occupation had to be extended to university level or the equivalent. This has already occurred on a large scale in North America. Voices were heard in many quarters in Europe calling for continuing training of this type.

3.1 The existing programmes

In the absence of national statistics, we have a survey conducted by a university centre (see Table I.4), updated to May 1988. It covers all French community programmes, for example out-of-hours studies leading to a degree in applied economics. The breakdown of these programmes is inevitably to some extent arbitrary since they often comprise several variants or options which may appear either as a single programme or a number of separate programmes. Despite this element of uncertainty, however, the table reveals significant features of the present situation in this important area of continuing training.

Table I.4 University-level training out of normal hours

Subject	Candidat (Preliminary examination)[1]	Licence (Degree)[2]	Post-graduate[3]	Total
Economics, commerce, social and political studies	5	11	17	33
Law	1	2	1	4
Psychology, pedagogics	2	4	2	8
Other human sciences (communication studies, data-processing, etc.)	1	3	4	8
Medical and paramedical studies	-	7	3	10
Science and applied science	-	-	6	6
Total	9	27	33	69

[1] Generally two years following completion of secondary education.
[2] Generally two years after preliminary qualification.
[3] Generally one year after obtaining a degree.

Source: based on an unofficial survey conducted by the Centre pour la formation des adultes (Adult Education Centre) (CEPA-UCL).

Almost half the existing programmes are concentrated in the areas of economics - including business management - and social and political science; in Belgium, these subjects generally come under the ESPO faculty (economics and social and political science). A quarter of the programmes relate to other human sciences; the entire range of natural and exact sciences, and theoretical and applied science (including the engineering faculty), account for barely a quarter of the 69 programmes listed, the emphasis being on paramedical studies (hospital management, health education, industrial medicine, etc.).

The breakdown given in the above table also shows the preponderance of supplementary training courses: 33 programmes are

explicitly classified as post-graduate courses, i.e. programmes accessible only after a completion of a minimum of four years' university education. It should be noted that among the 27 degree courses, a good many are aimed at the same category of students.

It will be seen that there are nine "candidature" (preliminary qualification) programmes enabling students to acquire a preliminary university-level education outside normal hours. In addition, subject to certain conditions, certain degree programmes are accessible to students lacking a university qualification, but holding, for example, a non-university higher education certificate (usually three years' studies are required).

This type of continuing training has two aims, therefore: firstly, social advancement, enabling working students - even though they may have been pursuing an occupation for some time - to obtain university-level education. The human sciences are mainly concerned here, against the background of the development of a service economy.

The supplementary training courses have a different - but equally important - objective. Students may wish to acquire a specialized skill (for example, hospital management) in response to a specific economic or social demand. These courses also enable students to adapt their skills in accordance with labour market requirements; for example, the holder of a degree in psychology might follow a one-year multi-disciplinary programme of human resource studies to improve his chances of finding a position in industry. Given the perpetual fluctuations in market outlets and the passing fashions for this or that discipline, these short programmes outside normal hours provide an effective substitute for more conventional types of training.

A final comment may be made. The 69 programmes referred to, covering the French-speaking part of the country, are organized by eleven educational institutions: three universities, five university

centres and three higher education establishments of university level. The geographical spread is quite broad: five are in Brussels, one in Louvain-la-Neuve, one in Liège, one in Namur, one in Charleroi and two in Mons.

3.2 The FOPES - a special case

While many of the out-of-hours university training programmes are aimed at a public which has already benefited from full-time university education, we shall now focus on one which stresses the objectives of social advancement and democratization through an original project which has now been running for more than ten years.

The Faculté Ouverte de Politique Economique et Sociale (Open Faculty of Economic and Social Policy) (FOPES) was the fruit of collaboration between Louvain University and the Mouvement Ouvrier Chrétien (Christian Workers' Movement) (MOC), an organization comprising trade unions, insurance funds, adult education movements, etc. in the French-speaking Christian world. The FOPES is still run jointly by the MOC and the UCL (Université catholique de Louvain).

Preparations for the project, by a succession of committees and working parties, lasted from 1970 to 1974, when it was launched on an experimental basis. The project was an original one on several counts; its primary objective was the democratization of access to university since the operation was aimed essentially at adults who had been unable to enter a university via the usual channels and for whom the FOPES represented the only chance of obtaining a university education.

However, there was another more specific objective. The project was aimed at "committed" adults, even though this expression might be interpreted in varying ways. This implied the creation of a new programme, and precluded the mere replication of standard university courses. Training was slanted towards action, and aimed at promoting the capacity to develop alternative policies.

These objectives called for innovations in teaching methodology. In particular, tuition is provided to groups of about 20 students, who follow a three-year degree course in social and economic policy; the teachers (mainly UCL lecturers) travel to the various localities to give their courses. To ensure continuity, each group is monitored by a course leader and one of the teachers is assigned to it as coordinator; an intensive back-up is provided, therefore.

From 1974 to 1987, altogether 710 students enrolled for FOPES courses; 321 have already graduated, while a further 172 have only to submit their dissertation. Over 14 years, 35 groups were formed in 12 towns in the French-speaking region. On average, nine groups were in operation every year comprising about 180 students (distributed over the three years of the degree course).

A survey covering the first 531 enrolments (from 1974 to 1983) gave the following results (in percentages):

by age:	up to 25	5.8
	25-29 years	23.2
	30-34 years	27.4
	35-39 years	23.4
	40-44 years	9.4
	45-49 years	7.4
	50 and over	2.8
by educational level:		
	lower secondary	31.7
	upper secondary	22.1
	higher education (non-university)	38.9
	university: preliminary qualification	3.6
	graduate	3.8

by occupational category:

unemployed or without an occupation	6.2
manual workers	7.9
self-employed	0.4
white-collar workers	10.9
"intermediate" professions and occupations*	61.8
liberal professions and managerial	11.5
not known	1.3

*Teachers, social workers, middle-management staff in business or administration, journalists, etc.

Clearly, the intention to aim the courses at adults was fully realized, since the 30-34 age range predominated. As regards educational level, 31.7% of FOPES students had not completed their secondary education and therefore could not have otherwise have entered university; however, 61% of them had taken an ISCO course in preparation (Institut Supérieur de Culture Ouvrière - Workers Adult Education Institute - which operates in a manner somewhat similar to the FOPES but at a lower educational level). From the breakdown above it will be seen that 8% of students were manual workers and 11% lower-grade employees, to which may be added 6% who were unemployed or without an occupation; roughly 20-25% of students, therefore, were of fairly humble social origins.

In view of the great difficulty of introducing, to university education, adults not prepared by conventional secondary education, these results are by no means negligible. It is nevertheless true that in the main, the FOPES operates with better educated adults, such as holders of non-university higher education certificates (38.9%) or those having completed secondary education (22.1%) and practising "intermediate" professions - typically social workers if this term is understood in the broad sense.

If this latter category is considered as its target group, the FOPES has largely achieved its three objectives. It offered these students an opportunity for personal development not otherwise available through existing educational channels; it has developed a training course in economic and social policy slanted towards a form of action alert to social changes and alternatives; it boldly adopted new and significant teaching methods, reviewing them continually over more than ten years.

The category which has in practice become the principal target group for the FOPES merits our attention. They could be seen as the equivalent of the skilled workers among whom the trade unions found their militants during the industrial era: i.e. the upper strata of a class at the base of the social hierarchy. With the development of a service economy and the raising of educational levels a new upper stratum has emerged from the broad class of white-collar workers. A type of militancy which is social rather than specifically trade unionist is forming within this category.

It appears to us that the third group of instructors identified by C. Marroy at the ONEM belongs to the same social stratum: "intellectual" instructors with a social orientation, coming below instructors with a more technical, vocational orientation and side-by-side with instructors in manual skills concerned with the traditional occupations in industry.

3.3 Financing and its determining factors

Continuing training at university level does not benefit from an exceptional system of financing. As it is organized by universities and equivalent institutions which are covered by the financing system for public education in Belgium (direct financing by the State and State subsidies for the "free" institutions, catholic and non-catholic), the same budgetary rules apply on condition that

the related programmes include a sufficient number of hours of tuition (interpreted in the broad sense) in the academic year; most programmes are so arranged as to satisfy this condition.

As a result, students pay a fee which, while not merely nominal - it amounts to about BF 15 000 - covers less than one-tenth of the average costs involved, the remainder being financed from public funds.

At first sight, this system looks as if it should stimulate the development of programmes which appear to meet a demand in order to attract additional students. Where a university centre already possesses "capital", i.e. ready-made courses and teachers which could easily be used for out-of-hours tuition subject to minor amendments to the full-time programmes, the additional cost involved in the new training activities is fairly low, while the centre's receipts are high since its subsidy increases pro-rata with the number of students.

The cost-benefit ratio becomes less favourable where the centre wishes to develop a teaching methodology adapted to the specific needs of continuing training; new course contents, special courses unsuitable for full-time application, intensive back-up, etc. In the case of the FOPES, for example, it appears that costs exceed receipts if training costs are taken to include a share of the university's general costs attributable to the total number of subsidized students. If these costs are not included (i.e., if it is assumed that the university would support them in any case), each additional FOPES student brings a small profit, despite high cost levels. The reason for this result is, of course, that training of this kind is based on existing "capital": a course assessed in terms of cost per hour costs half as much as a course assessed in terms of a normal lecturer's salary, since the latter is expected to devote at least

half his time firstly to research and secondly to tasks relating to management and the role of the university in society.

To understand the recent development of university-level continuing training, the background must now be discussed. In 1981, the public finance deficit had attained a level such that the debt was increased automatically by the cost of servicing it (the "snowball effect") and the new Government attempted to reduce public expenditure drastically, especially in the education sector. The universities were obliged to prepare their own "recovery" programmes (which entailed an implication that their situation was unsound) to be spread over seven years. In certain cases, these programmes invoived reductions of 18% in both academic and administrative personnel; this result could be achieved over seven years without redundancies on condition that recruitment to replace natural wastage was frozen. With an overall number of students which, while no longer growing, had not fallen off, the burden of continuing to provide full-time tuition was considerably increased.

In these circumstances, with the psychological implications of the prospect of further decline and a present in which the doors were closed to young researchers, there was little incentive to develop new forms of training. The majority of the 69 programmes listed in Table I.4 appear to have been prepared before 1981, since when the development of continuing training activities has slowed down sharply.

Having discussed the supply side in this area of education, we shall now go on to examine the demand side. It is always difficult to identify "needs" and still more so to determine effective demand in that the latter may be strongly influenced by supply - and especially by the manner in which the product is presented, brought to the attention of potential users and made desirable by the interest and quality of the programmes offered.

Two things are certain. Firstly, certain continuing training programmes are successful: after strong demand in the first and/or second years, the programme reaches its "cruising speed", acquiring a capacity to deal with any normal problems which arise, and both students and teachers are satisifed (and there are some signs to indicate a greater degree of satisfaction than is felt in relation to full-time courses). Secondly, some programmes merely vegetate, while others have even been abandoned.

These phenomena are the logical consequence of an education system which is extremely fragmented but hands out finance fairly readily - at least in times of prosperity. Under this system, many projects are totally decentralized in origin and there is a degree of competition between the respective centres as regards their "brand image" (if others are doing it I must hurry to get on the bandwagon), with the result that some projects work very well while others are failures. In lean years, the system merely ticks over and no-one wants to risk promoting new initiatives whatever the potential demand.

This interplay between highly conditional demand and supply which is governed by considerations very foreign to the problem result in a pseudo-market in continuing training which would not appear - at least in theory - to make for optimum results.

4. Private courses

In this chapter devoted to continuing training provided by traditional educational establishments and arrangements which have become institutional, such as apprenticeships in the small business sector and the ONEM's training activities, it should not be forgotten that private training establishments have also existed for a considerable time: these fee-paying establishments, which are not subsidized, are profit-making operations and do not issue official titles or diplomas. To distinguish them from "free" establishments (which are private but subsidized and with an official status) they are referred to as private establishments.

A look at the yellow pages of the telephone directory will show that these schools occupy no less than 17 pages for Brussels alone. Everything is to be found: lanaguage, secretarial and data-processing courses, courses for beauticians, hostesses, etc. A good many fall under the heading of continuing training in the sense that neither the skills taught nor the timetables are in line with those of conventional educational activities.

It hardly needs to be said that in Belgium no statistical series exists which includes these private courses. We had hoped to obtain an idea of their financial turnover via the VAT authorities; however, the rules applying to VAT liability are such as to make this impracticable. We then attempted to form an estimate on the basis of ONSS (National Social Security Office) data.

Tentative estimates

Heading 937 of the NACE classification used by the ONSS covers private day and night schools providing vocational and advanced training, and correspondence courses.

This heading is distinct from heading 935, which covers own account lecturers and teachers irrespective of the subject they teach, and 936, which covers driving schools.

On 30 June 1986, 144 establishments with altogether 1.159 employees came under heading 937. However, given the fairly low monthly salary levels, this number must include a proportion of part-time workers. The sector seems to be expanding: only 800 employees came under this heading in 1980.

The gross annual wage bill for the sector (obtained by multiplying the figure for the second quarter of 1986 by four) amounts to BF 430 million. Adding to this figure an estimate for the annual incomes of the 133 employers - on the assumption that they correspond to the average for a male employee in the sector - we arrive at a total figure of BF 500 million for staff costs in 1986.

Assuming that the sector is highly labour-intensive and that the other categories of expenditure (e.g. premises, equipment, etc.), account for no more than a quarter of the total, overall expenditure amounts to 670 million. This is by no means negligible, corresponding to about half the budget for apprenticeships in the small business sector, or about one-sixth of ONEM's training budget.

5. Paid training leave

Up to now, we have examined continuing training in relation to its organizers, taking four sectors, i.e., the national education system, the ONEM, the small business sector and the private (profit-making) sector. However, the development of continuing training is also conditioned by the possibilities open to workers to attend these courses, given the time they require and the time which must be devoted to the worker's occupation. Consequently, arrangements have been made enabling workers to take leave of absence to attend training courses without loss of remuneration. These arrangements will be discussed below; in this connection, we shall also look at training programmes organized by the trade unions.

5.1 Origins

The arrangements at present in effect in Belgium originated quite some time ago.[1] We owe them to the labour movement, which saw in continuing training an instrument for the cultural, political and economic advancement of the workers. In 1935, the Jeunesse ouvrière chrétienne (Young Christian Workers) (JOC) put forward the idea of "time credits", involving a right to training and the possibility of using remunerated time to attend training courses. The employers also displayed an interest in training, but from the specific viewpoint of improving the skills of their workers.

[1] Their history is recounted by G. Van den Hende in an article to appear in the Revue du travail (Brussels). By the same author, see also "La congé-education payé: premiers commentaires" in Orientations, no 6-7, June 1985.

The workers' demands resulted (mainly) in the three following measures:

(i) the social advancement allowance, introduced in 1963, amended in 1973 and discontinued in 1980; it enabled young workers to take several days' leave every year to attend training sessions organized by the youth movements;

(ii) time credits, introduced in 1973. Initially, this scheme mainly related to the social advancement courses; it enabled workers aged under 40 to follow these courses without loss of pay;

(iii) in 1977, discussions on the reform of the scheme were begun; the new scheme, called paid training leave, came into effect in 1983.

To avoid possible confusion, reference should be made to a different scheme, generally known as "trade union time credit". This scheme covers trade union training in the strict sense and is governed by collective agreements at sectoral level concluded in implementation of the inter-sectoral agreement of 1971.

5.2 The present scheme: paid training leave

a. The types of training followed

Paid training leave opens up entitlement to two major categories of training, called "vocational" and "general" respectively. They differ in their objectives and financing methods, numbers of participants, budget allocation and expenditure per person. Table I.5 gives a breakdown for the academic year 1985-86. It should be noted that the categories "vocational" and "general" are to be understood in a particular sense in this context.

Table I.5 Training leave 1985-86: breakdown by type of course

	Participants		Expenditure[1]
	number	%	%
A. "Vocational" training			
a. National education system			
Social advancement	13.649	56.9	
Plastic arts	372	1.6	
Higher education out-of-hours	599	2.5	
State Examining Board	9	0.0	
b. Small business sector	1.273	5.3	
Agriculture	20	0.1	
c. Sectoral (via Joint Committees)	1.364	5.7	
d. Other or not identified[2]	2.603	10.8	
Total	19.887	82.9	91.0
B. "General" courses	4 103	17.1	9.0
Total	23.990	100.0	100.0

[1] Amounts requested; of amounts already granted, general training accounts for 8.7% of the total.
[2] No breakdown can be given of courses other than those given under a to c.

The existing scheme is the fruit of a compromise between the employers' and workers' points of view. The poor results achieved by the previous scheme - i.e., time credits - appeared to be partly due to excessively strict limitations on the types of training permitted. The workers' movement was aiming at cultural liberation, looking further than the strictly vocational aspect. Consequently, the list of "vocational" courses referred to in the relevant legislation includes all types of social advancement and plastic arts courses,

although these are not necessarily job-related (a trainee might learn a language with a view to his next holiday, for example) and includes university and higher education courses given out of normal hours. In return, the employers insisted that the vocational training categories should not be confined to training organized in the small business sector (or in agriculture) but should include courses organized by the sectors, particularly Fabrimetal.

This compromise also had a dynamic aspect: a joint committee was empowered to approve any other type of training. It seems to have operated very flexibly, while attempting to ensure that priority in according these training facilities was given to the least-favoured workers rather than to those already well educated.

To understand the meaning given to "general training", reference should be made to the explanatory memorandum of the related law: "General training for workers must be conceived in relation to their status as members of the labour force and promote their advancement and integration in economic, social and civic life, by providing them with the necessary knowledge and intellectual instruments." It therefore oversteps the boundaries of vocational training, not in the direction of cultural education in the traditional sense (i.e., arts, literature, etc.), but rather of a "culture" impinging on economic, social and political life in the broad sense. Of the 17% of participants under "general training", 95% attended courses organized by the trade unions, although these courses were not trade union training in the strict sense (it scarcely needs to be said that this distinction is a valid one and constantly gives rise to controversy).

The table shows great diversity but, in many cases, small numbers. Out-of-hours training under the national education system accounts for 60% of the total; by contrast, training organized by the trade unions accounts for rather less than 17% of the total number of participants, but under 9% of the budget, implying that the related courses are less costly.

b. The operation of the system

The successive training leave schemes established an individual right to training which was not necessarily linked to the occupation practiced. In comparison with practice in other countries, the Belgian scheme appears to be a fairly original one.

While the conditions under which training leave can be taken are governed by law, the worker has a right to a period of absence from work without loss of remuneration. This right is accorded to all employees in the private sector[1] irrespective of age.

It should be noted, however, that a pay ceiling exists: the employer can only attain reimbursement of the salary up to a given hourly or monthly level. He may, of course, continue to pay the full salary, but is not obliged to do so; in such cases the worker retains the right to training leave, but with some loss of income (in respect of the share exceeding the ceiling).

Under the time credits scheme, no provision was made for the indexation of this ceiling and it remained unchanged until 1983. With the reform of the training leave system, it was raised and linked to the trend of average wages under agreement. We shall see below how this ceiling on reimbursement may have substantially curbed the operation of the right to training leave.

The exercise of this right is also conditioned by a second factor. Absences of this kind may cause disruption at work and despite legal provisions offering protection against dismissal, the fear of redundancy may effectively curb demand, especially in a period of high unemployment.

c. Financing

There are two separate methods of financing.

"Vocational" training is financed in equal shares by the State and the employers. The employers' share is currently fixed at 0.03% of the gross wage bill.

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[1] Not in the public sector - apparently for budgetary reasons - and not for teachers.

"General" training, on the other hand, is financed exclusively by the State.

d. Expenditure

Given the very long administrative delays applying to reimbursements, there are two possible ways of calculating expenditure: on the basis of amounts already granted or on the basis of amounts applied for. The latter method is likely to give a figure corresponding more closely to actual expenditure. It should be noted that these calculations take account solely of salary payments reimbursed to employers. Given the action of the ceiling, the salary corresponding to the actual number of hours training taken against working time may in fact be higher. Further, the other costs involved in training activities are not given here; a substantial share appears in the national education budget.

Table I.6 Training leave budget, 1985-86

	Amounts granted			Amounts applied for		
	Vocational	General	Total	Vocational	General	Total
Budget: (BF million)	783,6	75,1	857,7	1.078,1	96,7	1.174,8
breakdown	91.3	8.7	= 100.0	91.0	9.0	= 100.0
Participants: number	19.887	4.103	23.990			
breakdown	82.9	17.1	= 100.0			
Expenditure per person:						
BF thousand	39,4	18,3	35,8	54,2	23,6	49,0
index	110.1	51.1	= 100.0	110.7	48.1	= 100.0

A budget of the order of BF 1 000 million is by no means negligible, corresponding to one quarter of the ONEM's training budget, while the number of participants in this scheme corresponded to 64% of the total number of ONEM trainees in 1985. Whilst these

figures show that expenditure per person is lower under the training leave scheme, it still amounts to almost half the corresponding figure for the ONEM (47.4% on the basis of amounts applied for) and more than half (52.5%) if the comparison is confined to the "vocational" sector.

The second point to note is the difference in cost between "vocational" and "general" training. The latter, mainly organized by the trade unions, has a unit cost 50% lower; however, this category covers shorter courses, as desired by the unions themselves.

5.3 Trends

Two reservations apply to the statistics we have available to trace the development of the three training leave schemes, especially as regards expenditure: short-term fluctuations (from year to year) should be treated with reserve and the figures for certain years are of doubtful accuracy.[1] They are, however, adequate to determine the main trends and evaluate factors making for the success or failure of the schemes in question.

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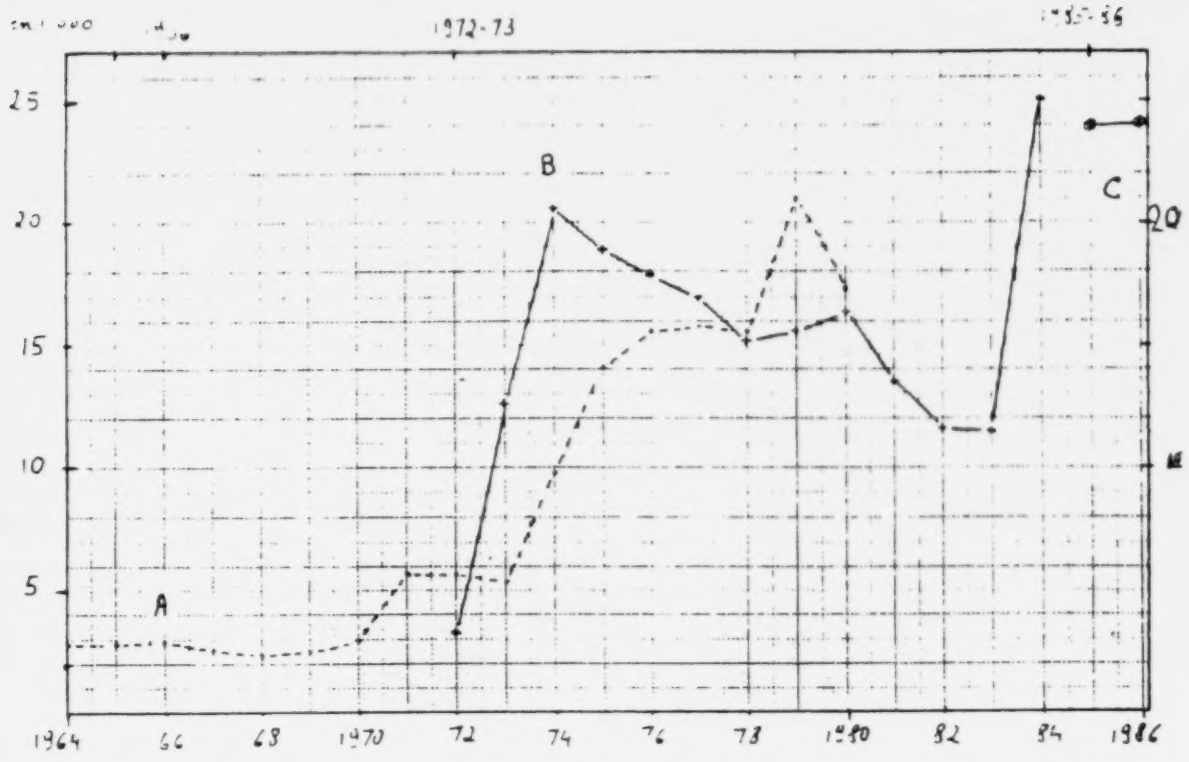
[1] Given the administrative delays involved, definitive figures only become available several years late. As statistics in this area are not published regularly, we have had to rely on individual returns, often with different cut-off dates. In addition, the discrepancy between the calendar and academic years can falsify year-to-year fluctuations.

Graph I.2 Trend in numbers of participants in the three training leave schemes



A = Social advancement allowances
B = Time credits
C = Paid training leave

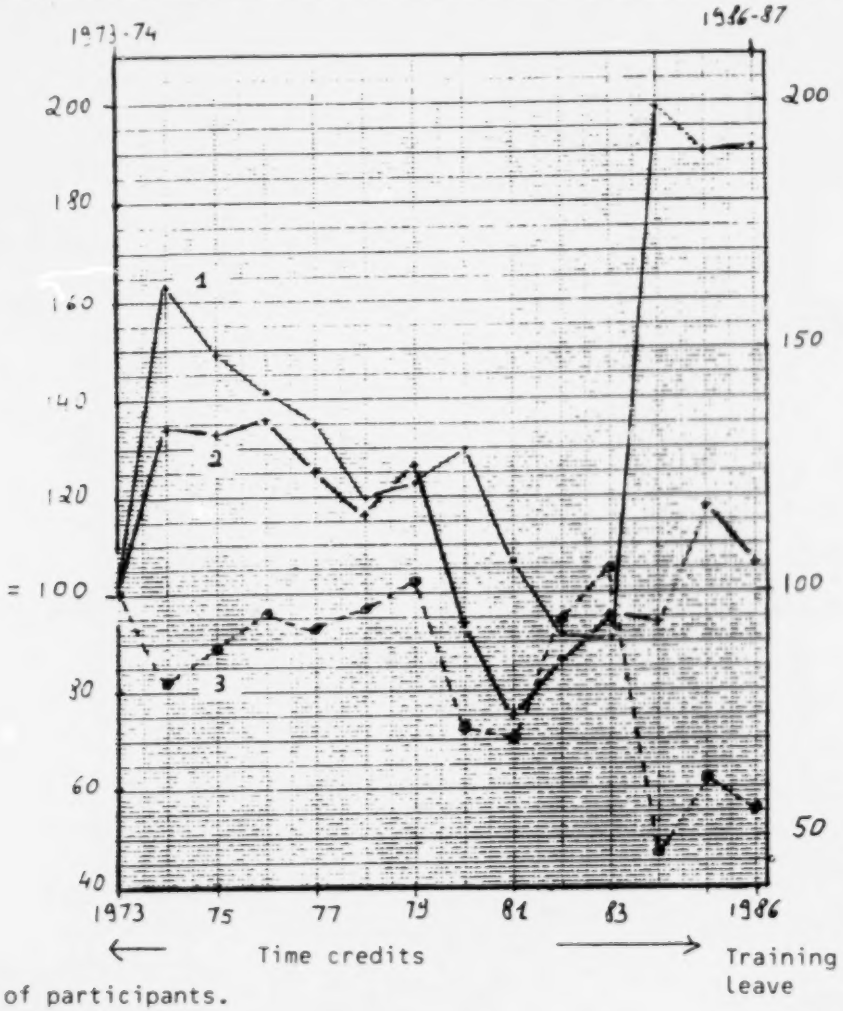
a. Trends over time

Graph I.2 shows the trend in the number of participants in each of the three schemes. It should be emphasized that the first scheme - the social advancement allowance - was much more limited in scope than the other two. In 1978, for example, the number of beneficiaries of this allowance equalled the number of participants in the time credit scheme; however, the amount of the allowance corresponded to only 3% of the unit cost of the latter scheme.

Bearing this in mind, the trends shown are not surprising. After six years in which only 3 000 workers per year benefited under the scheme, the number rose steadily, eventually to exceed the number of participants in the time credit scheme. The causes of its abolition in 1980, linked to the division of the education system along lingusitic lines, are still obscure.

The time credits scheme has quite a different scope. Its promoters hoped to achieve a "cruising speed" of 50 000 beneficiaries a year; however, the maximum attained was only 20 600 in 1974 and since then the number has fallen off to a low of 10 700 in 1983-84. This relative failure prompted a reform of the scheme, which was re-named "paid training leave" beginning with the 1984-85 academic year. The last two years for which figures are available show an appreciably higher number of participants (24 000); however, it may also be noted that in its last year of existence, the number of beneficiaries under the time credits scheme shot up to 25 100. Despite an element of unreliability in the figures, these recent trends should be taken into account in attempting to determine this change in behaviour.

Graph I.3 Training leave: participants and expenditure (1973-74 = index 100)



1 Number of participants.
2 Overall expenditure.
3 2/1, i.e., expenditure per person.

Firstly, we shall examine the trend in overall expenditure and expenditure per person (Graph I.3). Given the possible inaccuracies in the figures for year-to-year fluctuations, we shall confine ourselves to the three following observations:

(i) until 1983-84, total expenditure (at constant prices) was broadly in line with the number of beneficiaries; it follows - again broadly - that expenditure per person showed little significant change;

(ii) the figures for 1984-85 are of doubtful accuracy, even though there undoubtedly was a rise in the number of participants and may well have been a reduction in the unit cost, in view of the figures for the two subsubsequent years;

(iii) the two years of the training leave scheme show a sharp rise in the number of participants but a unit cost corresponding to about 60% of that for the time credits scheme (even though the calculations were based on the amounts applied for, which were in any case very close to the amounts granted).

On the basis of the information available, the reduction in expenditure per person during the three last years shown is hard to explain. The same applies, incidentally, to the years 1980-81 and 1981-82. The expansion of "general" training is not sufficient explanation, since if the figures were limited to vocational training alone, the index would merely rise from 60 to 67. Should this be seen as an indication that vocational training courses have become shorter or that the number of hours giving rise to time credits has fallen because out-of-hours training takes place to a greater extent outside work timetables? However, this elementary statistical comparison points to a question which never seems to have been raised.

b. Reasons for the successes and setbacks of the respective schemes

The new training leave scheme seems to have met with greater success that its predecessor, since the number of participants has more than doubled. In determining the reasons we can draw lessons for a continuing training policy.

The first reason might appear to be the fact that the new scheme is not restricted to participants under 40; however, this does not carry conviction since under-40s account for less than 10% of all beneficiaries.

The second reason appears to be the broadening of the areas of training available under the new scheme. Even though social advancement training is still predominant, while the number of participants under each of the other headings in Table I.5 is fairly modest, their total indicates a substantial broadening of the area covered by the training leave scheme.[1]

Technical adjustments may also have had a favourable influence, such as permitting shorter training courses and providing fuller coverage as from the first year.

Finally, it is likely that the non-indexation of the ceiling above which the salary was not reimbursed to the employer has exercised a progressively stronger curb on the operation of the scheme. The increase in the number of participants in the last year of the time credits scheme (1984-85) may be due to the higher ceiling introduced in that year; this suggests that the income factor has an important influence on behaviour as regards training.

In this respect, it may be noted that of the workers not affected by the current ceiling, about half are manual workers while a third are white-collar employees.[2]

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[1] It is impossible to be more precise, given the 11% "not identified" and the fact that training sponsored by the unions was already available under the time credits scheme.

[2] These figures are very approximate and are probably too low since the wage statistics published by the Social Security Office are falsified by inadequate data on part-time workers.

CHAPTER II TRAINING IN FIRMS AND SECTORS

In Belgium no regular statistics are available on vocational training provided in firms (this subject was outside the scope of our previous report to CEDEFOP). This lack of information is especially serious in respect of continuing training, which also includes the areas of advanced training and retraining.

This chapter attempts a preliminary exploration of the subject. It is based on surveys we carried out in three industrial and three service sectors.[1] The reason for this equal division between industry and the services was mainly the fact that in 1986 the services accounted for more than half of total salaried employment in the private sector.

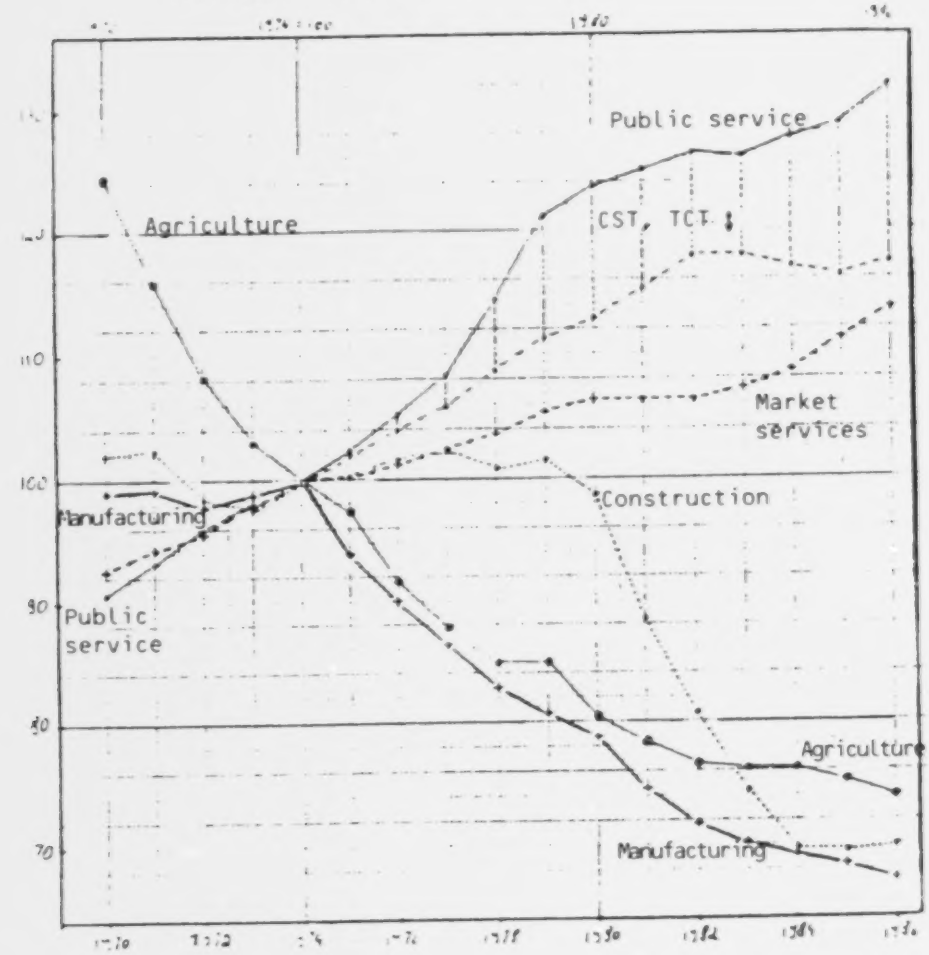
In addition, the labour market crisis beginning in 1975 had a radically different impact on the respective halves of the Belgian economy. The graph below illustrates the following major features:
(i) Employment in manufacturing, fairly stable until 1974, began to fall off drastically in 1975, declining by 30% in the following ten years - i.e., at roughly the same rate as the long-term downtrend in agricultural employment.
(ii) In the building industry, where employment held steady through the first phase of the crisis, employment has also fallen by 30% since 1981 - but over only four years.
(iii) By contrast, the first phase of the crisis had no effect on the upward trend of employment in the market services sector. However, the second phase curbed this growth in 1981 and 1982, the subsequent recovery being mainly due to the development of part-time work.

[1] Not including the public sector.

(iv) The growth in employment in the public sector, paralleling that in market services, mitigated the decline of employment in manufacturing; however, it levelled out in 1983 if the effects of unemployment absorption programmes such as the CST, TCT, etc. are discounted.

This overall depression in the labour market - though with widely differing sectoral trends - forms the background for our investigation of the training problems encountered by firms and in the respective sectors in Belgium. It may be recalled that among the EEC countries, Belgium was one of those hardest hit by the crisis.

Graph II.1 Trends in employment (employees and self-employed) in the major sectors



Agriculture, fisheries, etc.

Industries
- Energy: not given
- Manufacturing
- Building
- Transport and communications: not given

Services
- Market services: all except public services
- Public services: includes public sector employees falling within classification 9; a curve is also shown excluding the effects of the unemployment absorption programmes (CST, TCT, CMT, etc.).

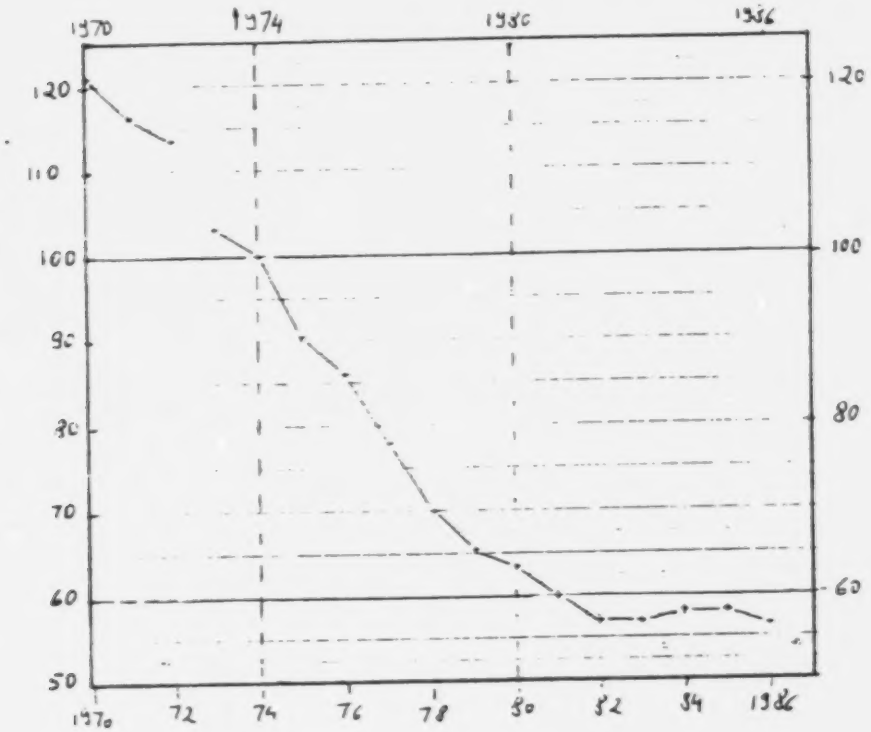
Source: MET estimates

1. Industry

1.1 Textiles

Whenever reference is made to declining sectors in industry, textiles immediately spring to mind. Together with the coal and steel industry, this sector formed the basis of Belgium's early industrialization. As an industry using a great deal of low-skilled labour, it was bound to succumb to competition from low wage countries. In fact, the sector was badly hit from the very beginning of the crisis, with a 35% fall in employment over five years.

Graph II.2 Employment trend in the textile industry
(manual and white-collar workers) (Social Security Office)



Around 1980, this situation prompted the public authorities to prepare a "Textile plan". A report by an international consultant indicated those areas of the industry which were beyond recovery but also sub-sectors or highly sophisticated products in which Belgium could retain a good competitive position. Reconstruction of this kind called for radically new skills and consequently for substantial efforts as regards training. The textile sector appears to have tackled this challenge, developing an effective system of human resource management of which vocational training activities form a part.

a. The shortage of skilled workers

The Textile plan led to the establishment of a tripartite institute, comprising the Employers' Federation (Febeltex), the trade union organizations and the public authorities. In the light of the report on the outlook for the development of textile production, the institute commissioned a further study - the Coetsier report[1] - evaluating the consequent employment trends and skill requirements. This report clearly illustrates the problems arising in the implementation of a training policy.

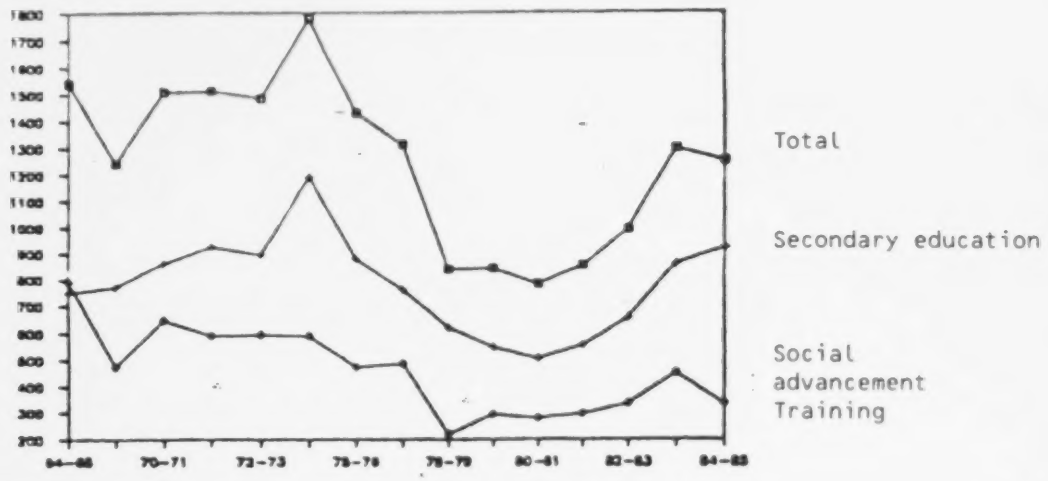
In view of the expected trends of production and productivity, overall employment in the textile industry should continue to contract, falling to 5% below its present level by 1990 and 16% by 1995. The report strongly emphasizes that this contraction in overall employment by no means excludes problems of skill shortages; on the contrary, "the textile industry will find itself crying out for skilled labour" (page 40).

[1] P. Coetsier and J. Tuytschaever, "Ecarts existant actuellement et écarts prévisibles dans un proche avenir entre l'offre quantitative et l'offre qualitative sur le marché de l'emploi dans le cas du secteur textile en case de politique stable. Réflexions à propos d'une politique adaptée"; summary report. Belgian Textiles and Clothing Institute, 60 pages (undated).

This may be found surprising in view of the unemployment figures. The number of textile sector job-seekers, i.e., those who were working in the sector before becoming redundant, corresponds to 13% of present total employment in the textile industry. Of these 8 251 unemployed, however, the ONEM statistics list only 216 as being trained in textile sector occupations, and of those only 84 as having experience in the sector. Insofar as reliance can be placed on this method of evaluating skills, the unemployed can hardly be said to form a reservoir of suitable labour at this time (a factor which will also further accentuate the difficulty of reintegrating these workers into the labour market).

The report then goes on to examine training, to evaluate the future supply of trained manpower. The graph below shows the two traditional channels for vocational training: full-time tuition within the education system (secondary education) and evening or weekend courses (social advancement training). The graph suggests that the crisis in the textile industry was a determining factor in students' choice of studies, since the number of trainees in this branch fell by 50% in three years (from 1974 to 1978). The subsequent recovery - which was fairly modest - may be due largely to promotional activities by the sector.

Graph II.3 Number of persons in training for occupations in the textile sector



Source: Coetsier report, p. 28.

This trend in young people's choice of training courses is, of course, understandable, though not necessarily desirable. This phenomenon illustrates the extent to which detailed information is needed.

b. An information system

Information was the first concern of the Centre for training, refresher training and retraining for the textile and knitwear industry (CEFRET), which is run jointly by employers and trade unions; the Centre was set up in response to the desire of the sector - and of Febeltex in particular - to conduct an active human resource management policy throughout the industry. First proposed in 1976, however, the Centre did not come into being until 1984.

To implement a policy of this kind, it was first necessary to identify the skills needed by firms to enable the latter to be developed. This was the aim of the "occupational profiles" project launched in 1984. More than 100 experts from the industry and representatives of employers and trade unions collaborated in this project, together with the ONEM. The work was divided into six sub-sectors, decentralized to regional level: close coordination was ensured by CEFRET personnel.

The result was a series of 74 detailed occupational profiles, comprising three elements:

(i) a description of the job, its location within the production process and the tasks involved (operational, supervisory, communications, decision-making);

(ii) the requirements for the job, e.g., physical, psychological, working conditions;

(iii) a description of the training necessary.

This last element reflects the aim of guiding training policy in

schools (in liaison with the health, welfare and guidance centres), training centres, including ONEM centres, and also individual firms.

Quantitative and qualitative mismatching on the labour market does not only take the obvious, visible form: "hidden mismatching also exists where the worker holding the job is unable - or only partially able - to perform the related tasks satisfactorily. Here, the qualifications required for the post (knowledge, aptitude, motivation, etc.) do not correspond to the attributes in reality possessed or displayed by the employee. This form of mismatching, which can sometimes remain hidden for a considerable time, constitutes an important "black spot"".[1]

In this project, stress was placed on occupations which would survive in the immediate future, in the light of technological advances. The application of electronics and data-processing technology is bound to bring about "profound changes in the organization of firms, and in job content and way of working. Manual tasks will tend to become more specialized, requiring a higher level of technical know-how and there will be a trend towards more cerebral activities and tasks involving supervisory responsibilities" (page 3). Tomorrow's textile workers will no longer resemble the workforce in the traditional sectors.

Finally, these occupational profiles are designed to be regularly updated. In addition, the textile sector has developed statistical machinery which will make it possible to follow employment trends by sub-sector and by region, with an extremely detailed occupational classification corresponding realistically to the specific tasks involved. This is a major innovation in a country in which employment statistics broken down by profession, occupation or qualification are sadly lacking.

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[1] Profils professionnels. Guide de lecture (1987), p. 3.

c. Training activities

Clearly, CEFRET is tackling the problem of vocational training from the viewpoint of the human resources policy, conducted at sectoral level in the context of employer/worker relations and in liaison with schools and the ONEM.

Its training activites mainly comprise actions conducted at the request of individual firms, e.g. training sessions organized in modular form or the provision of specific types of assistance. The following figures are available:

	1984	1985	1986
number of persons in training	368	759	751
hours of training given		20 480	19 548
hours per person trained		27	26

The average of 26 or 27 hours per trainee clearly shows that these are very specific actions, oriented towards particular needs. The number of workers concerned represents about 1.5% of the total workforce in the sector.

More generally, CEFRET is concerned with instructor training, the creation of teaching material and in-service training for teaching staff in vocational and technical schools. This latter activity involves 120 teachers in ten or so schools.

Recently, the textile sector launched an important training scheme for 500 young people aged under 18, which we shall examine in Chapter III in relation to industrial apprenticeships.

d. Budget

CEFRET's annual budget amounts to a little less than 0.1% of the textile industry's gross wage bill. It is partly financed directly by the sector, the remainder deriving from ONEM operations approved by the linguistic communities.

An agreement of this kind has been concluded with the Flemish-speaking community (80% of the industry is located in Flemish-speaking regions) but not with the French community.

1.2 Fabrimétal

Fabrimétal is a federation of firms covering a vast and heterogenous sector: metal manufacture, engineering, electrical and electronic equipment and plastics processing. The federation has several regional centres, divided into Flemish and French-speaking sections. Each section has a training institute, e.g. the IFPM (Institute for post-School education) for the French-speaking section, which accounts for about 40% of the sector's activity.

a. Skilled labour shortages

The sector has seen substantial job losses and numerous restructuring operations. While 1987 was still a difficult year, it may be hoped that employment will stabilize in 1988 - at least in Wallonia. "This slightly more favourable outlook brings with it the immediate reappearance of a problem already affecting Fabrimétal for a number of years: the lack of skilled labour", to use the words of the Fabrimétal-Wallonia representative at a press conference held on 1 June 1988.

In a rapid survey, 407 firms were contacted; of the 85 replying, 60 stated that they were seeking personnel. Altogether 300 vacancies for manual workers existed, of which 84 had been unfilled for at least three months, while there were 83 vacancies for white-collar workers, of which 20 had been unfilled for at least a year. The sector's total workforce in Wallonia numbers 60 000.

While these figures are hardly sufficient for a quantitative evaluation of the lack of skilled manpower, they do provide an indication from the qualitative viewpoint. Fabrimétal criticizes the "lack of correspondence between the training provided and the needs of firms in our sector". The Federation also criticizes trainees' choice of courses and maintains that "in certain training courses aimed at occupations in industry, the quality of training and skill levels attained are often inadequate to meet the needs of technical occupations in our industry".

To develop training, in 1980 Fabrimétal launched an "action profil" (profiles project) aimed at defining the capabilities required for the basic trades in the sector. A statistical survey of qualifications was also envisaged but this project did not elicit sufficient support.

b. Training activities

The IFPM, like its Dutch-speaking opposite number, is run jointly by employers and trade unions. Set up in 1968, its aim is to promote vocational training in the sector, taking into account:

- training provision in firms
- the ONEM schemes
- the social advancement courses.

Every year, the Institute proposes training programmes adapted to firms' needs. In 1987, it organized 279 such programmes, with 2 469 participants from 103 different firms. These courses are primarily aimed at manual workers; however, in 1987 white-collar workers accounted for 11% of the total.

In Chapter III a description is given of a training programme launched in the Namur-Hainaut region.

c. Budget

A collective agreement signed on 30 June 1983 stipulates that a share of the contributions paid to the Fonds de Sécurité d'Existence (Social Security Fund) must be devoted to training. This share amounts to 0.1% of the gross wage bill.

1.3 The building sector

The employment level in the building sector declined by 30% from 1981 to 1986. Nevertheless, in its annual report for 1987 the Employers' Federation states that: "The employers' and workers' organizations must today work together to seek a "magic formula" to combat the serious threat posed by shortages of skilled labour. Training has become an absolute priority" (from the President's introduction, page 7). In a sector comprising a considerable number of small firms, in which labour can move readily from one work site to another, it is clear that the training problem must be tackled at sectoral level.

a. The building sector vocational training funds (FFC)

The problem has existed for many years: a recent FFC paper[1] recalls that the sector was already suffering from a shortage of skilled labour in the early 60s. This was during a period in which the unemployment rate in Belgium was falling strongly, to reach its historic low in 1964. Training in the building sector must be acquired either on-the-job or at technical or vocational schools; both these channels involve difficulties, although of a different kind.

[1] Dossier No 4, Le Fonds de la formation professionnelle de la Construction. 2nd edition, February 1988.

On-the-job training, despite its flexibility, has one drawback: it cannot readily take account of significant technical advances, which would call for a different basic approach. In the training schools, on the other hand, building sector occupations suffer from a poor image, lacking the prestige of the technical or "intellectual" professions and occupations. This training sector is in danger of being locked into a vicious circle: it fails to attract the most gifted pupils and at the same time suffers from an influx of the less-gifted, for whom it is seen as a last resort or even a punishment.

A similar analysis prompted the sector to set up the FFC in 1965. This body is run jointly by employers and workers and possesses stable and substantial financial resources since all firms in the sector are required to pay a contribution corresponding to 0.3% of their gross wage bill. At first, coverage was limited to firms in the carcase work sector, but since 1987 it has been extended to the many firms involved in finishing work.

Three lines of action may be distinguished. In addition to the Fund's general information and promotional activities, its training operations partly involve the schools providing basic training for young people and partly the ONEM in respect of short-term courses for adults.

b. The training schools

To raise the level of training for building sector occupations and make the corresponding sections of the vocational and technical schools more attractive, a project has been launched to develop a four-year multi-skill training programme in the context of full-time vocational education. This programme could also take the form of a training/work experience scheme, in the light of the higher school-leaving age (18 years), the introduction of industrial apprenticeships and the establishment of part-time training centres.

However, it appears that all this is still at the project stage. In the meantime, the number of students in building trades sections, both technical and vocational, is still declining, falling by about 7% between 1979-80 and 1985-86, if we have correctly understood a particularly abstruse paper on this subject.[1]

c. The ONEM

As regards adult vocational training, refresher training and accelerated training for workers in the building industry, the FFC relies mainly on the many ONEM training programmes which have been in existence for some time. "Cooperation between the two bodies mainly concerns financial arrangements, i.e., the payment of supplementary bonuses to trainees ... in addition, two training centres for machine and crane operators have been set up" (Dossier No 4, p. 9).

The introduction of these bonuses resulted from the difficulty of attracting workers to attend these training courses and the need to have available a labour force loyal to the sector. In addition to the bonuses, trainees' travel costs during the course are reimbursed (unemployment benefit payments are not affected) and those who subsequently work in the sector become entitled to further bonuses. For example, a worker following a thirty-week mason's course is entitled to a premium after six months and further premiums after twelve and twenty-four months' work in the sector, the total amounting to BF 12 000 (Dossier No 5, p. 11). It may be asked, however, whether this complicated system of fairly modest premiums is really effective.

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[1] FFC Dossier No 28, March 1986: Les sections "Construction-gros oeuvre" et leur population scolaire, de l'année scolaire 67-68 to 85-86.

d. Information

Like its opposite number in the textile sector, the FFC attempts to maintain an ongoing promotional and information campaign.

There is, in fact, a lack of detailed and systematic information regarding every aspect of employment in the sector. A recent FFC document[1] uses a forecast by the Planning Office regarding the overall volume of employment in the building industry: in relation to 1986 (= 100) the level should climb progressively to reach index 135 in the year 2000. The document shows a breakdown of overall employment in 27 occupations, for which it provides forecasts up to the year 2000. These calculations are based on the occupational structure of the workforce in the building sector drawn from the 1981 census, which is merely applied to the overall volume of employment as estimated by the Planning Office. Can a forecast which assumes an unvarying occupational structure over a twenty-year horizon really be used as a guide for training policy?

However, this does not appear to be the FFC's intention; it is rather banking on the expansion of basic training within the education system - covering as wide a range of skills as possible - and on specific operations by firms in collaboration with the ONEM. The question is whether the lack of skilled labour of which the sector complains is of a nature such that these traditional measures will be sufficient. In the affirmative, the difficulty will be resolved following a period of adjustment as has been the case in the past. If not, the sector - short of a "magic formula" - will have to adopt systematic measures for which more detailed information appears to be a pre-condition.

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[1] Aperçu du secteur de la construction (un-dated).

2. The services

2.1 The distributive industry

In this sector, which employs 450 000 persons - i.e. 12% of the working population - a distinction should be made between small tradesmen, for whom training is organized by the small business sector, and the major distributive firms which employ large numbers of people. The workforce is predominantly female and includes a high proportion of part-time workers (more than 50% in the major department stores). Overall, employment is on a gently rising trend.

By contrast with the industrial sectors, few complaints are expressed about shortages of skilled labour; the only difficulties referred to concern certain specialized trades - mainly manual - such as refrigeration engineers or butchers.

At sectoral - or rather sub-sectoral - level, the Social Fund, which is run jointly by employers and workers, is concerned with vocational training. During the 70s, it organized language and accountancy courses in collaboration with the ONEM. These courses ran successfully for five to seven years, but were felt to be too general in relation to certain specific needs (e.g. the skills required to manage a fruits and vegetables department). The courses were dropped in 1982.

The training budgets were kept in existence but applied to a different scheme. In each of the major sub-sectors, a budget of BF 2.5 million is available to the Federation's member firms, which can request assistance from the Fund for the financing of courses they

organize themselves. This assistance, which is limited to BF 6 000 per trainee, may not correspond to more than half the related training costs. Training courses aided in this way mainly concern sales techniques, new technologies and language tuition. The trade unions can benefit under the scheme in respect of their courses designed to familiarize personnel with new technologies.

At sectoral level, training policy consists essentially of providing financial incentives for initiatives by the firms themselves. Training needs seem to have been more acute during the 70s, when a tight labour market led to the recruitment of ill-trained personnel. At present firms can find personnel whose educational level exceeds their requirements for recruitment; however, it was commented that if the labour market became tighter once again, the training problem could become more urgent.

2.2 The insurance sector

ONSS (Social Security Office) statistics show that employment in the insurance sector is continuing to rise. More precise figures provided by the Union professionnelle des entreprises d'assurance (Federation of Insurance Companies) (UPEA) tend to qualify this assertion, however, taking account of part-time employment.

Table II. Employment in the insurance sector

Employment	1982	1986	number	%
Full-time	27 550	27 670	+ 120	+ 0.4
Part-time	1 588	2 488	+ 900	+ 56.7
Total	29 138	30 158	+ 1 020	+ 3.5
As equivalent of full-time employment[1]	28 344	28 914	+ 570	+ 2.0

Source: Based on the 1986-87 UPA Report, p. 13 and 14.

[1] It has been assumed that part-time workers are working half-time.

Nine-tenths of the rise in the employment level over the last four years is due to the expansion of part-time working. Full-time employment has only risen by 0.4%, as against 3.5% for the overall total.

a. Training centre for occupations in the insurance sector (CFA)

At the beginning of the 60s, the UPEA began to concern itself with the training of its personnel. After some research in several foreign countries, a decision was taken to set up a training centre. The centre is not run jointly, although the trade unions are represented on a training committee.

The centre operates like a very specialized training school; courses are set up at the request of member firms, who pay the costs involved and monitor the results. The table below shows the structure of the centre's operations in 1987.

	1	2
411. Techniques employed in the respective branches, e.g. 411.34 Fire and industrial hazards (These courses are generally given in the late afternoon)	38	317
412. Advanced training in the techniques employed in the respective branches (Whole-day seminars, according to case)	16	318
413. Special training (One-day classes)	15	157
414. Training for managerial staff (Upper management level)	6	146
415. In-firm training	10	70
516. ONEM	-	-
TOTAL	85	1 008

[1] Number of operations
[2] Number of participants

These training operations are aimed primarily at middle and upper-level management personnel, i.e. the upper third of the sector's workforce. The participation rate of 1000 persons per year therefore represents an annual rate of 10% for this category.

b. Budget

The CFA's annual budget amounts to BF 18 million. It follows that the average cost to the employer per trainee is BF 18 000; from another viewpoint, the CFA's training budget corresponds to 0.06% of the sector's gross wage bill.

At the same time, the insurance firms also carry out their own training programmes: overall, they devote on average an amount equal to 0.4% of their wage bill to training, although this figure may be as high as 1.2% in certain cases according to certain well-placed informants.

2.3 The banking sector

To investigate vocational training problems in the banking sector, we turned directly to the institutions themselves, approaching one of the country's major banks which essentially provides its own vocational training.

a. Two aspects of training

The first point to note is the impressive scale of the resources devoted to training, which correspond to 3.5% of the firm's gross wage bill. While it is true that three-quarters of this sum is accounted for by the salaries of employees in training and only the remaining quarter corresponds to direct training costs, nevertheless the latter still amount to almost 0.8% of the wage bill - a substantial figure.

The fact that 2.4% of the wage bill is devoted to training time illustrates the magnitude of the operation: this corresponds to an average of five days per year per worker. Almost every employee takes

part in a training scheme in the course of a given year. For the lower grades, very streamlined programmes are provided, lasting for from three to eight days per year. For managerial personnel, the programmes are often longer and less frequent, but they last for up to three weeks per year.

The first aspect of the training given concerns banking techniques. In respect of current techniques, training is given entirely by the bank's technicians, who have been specially trained as instructors. The bank only has recourse to outside training courses in the case of highly sophisticated products (about 10% of the total relating to banking techniques).

The second aspect is training in management. This has been developed considerably in recent years and is the source of the increase in training expenditure, which has risen from 3% to the present 3.5% of the wage bill over ten years. This form of training accounts at present for almost quarter of the total number of training days.

These activities reflect an overall company policy oriented towards management by objectives, in a style more participative than authoritarian and seeking communication with personnel and their motivation: this policy also seeks to identify managerial functions as distinct from purely technical functions. The institution calls mainly on outside sources for training in management, but training sessions are often organized jointly; in this way, training can be closely linked to the bank's objectives while avoiding the need to establish an internal group of instructors which would tend to become too isolated.

b. Company training

By contrast with the situation noted in a number of industrial sectors, skilled labour shortages do not provide the main motivation

for the bank's training activities. The principal concern is rather with ongoing human resource management, aimed at developing a "company spirit"; training is an element in this process, as are quality circles.

With this in mind, it is easy to understand that a major firm with over 15 000 employees will prefer to organize its own training. The bank calls on the Association belge des Banques (Association of Belgian Banks) to only a marginal extent, mainly in connection with training in non-differentiated products. As regards sophisticated products and management techniques, every firm in the sector thinks in terms of its competitive position.

Similarly, a firm of this kind will not make use of the ONEM's training operations and is not concerned with apprenticeship schemes. It hardly ever recruits personnel who have not completed secondary education. By providing opportunities for university students to undertake periods of training during their studies, the bank builds up a reservoir of personnel for possible recruitment.

CHAPTER III INITIATIVES IN THE 1980s

The 1980s have seen the launch of many widely varying initiatives in the area of vocational training. All overstep the boundaries of full-time schooling. One of these new schemes combines classroom training with work experience, another involves setting up businesses with the objective of teaching participants a trade, while others represent specific vocational training and integration operations. In this chapter, these schemes, which mainly concern young people - especially marginalized young people - will be examined from the viewpoint of continuing training.

The emergence of schemes of this kind in the 1980s was primarily due to the economic context. The upsurge in unemployment in 1981, stronger even than in 1975, signalled the beginning of the second phase of the crisis in Belgium. Adding to the pressure on an already very depressed labour market, this second phase disrupted the country's economic and social life to a much greater extent than the first. The labour market situation of young people is the most dramatic illustration of this disruption.

During the first phase (1976-80), the employment level for young people aged 20-24 held up fairly well, partly due to unemployment absorption schemes such as the CST, TCT, etc.; from 1981 to 1984, by contrast, it fell by 18%.[1] At the same time, the relative pay levels for young people declined substantially, especially during the second phase, to fall to their lowest level for 30 years.[2] Despite inaccuracies in the statistics, it was clear that young people were suffering from severe and prolonged unemployment. Manifestly, something had to be done.

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[1] R. Leroy and A. Godano, "L'emploi des jeunes dans la crise", IRES Bulletin No 107, March 1986.

[2] R. Leroy, "Le salaire des jeunes est-il flexible? Belgique, 1955-1984, ouvriers", IRES Bulletin No 116, May 1987.

However, at the same time the room for manoeuvre for a policy of this kind had become very restricted. The governing coalition - liberals and Christian socialists - adopted severely restrictive measures from 1981 to 1987 to fight inflation, restore the competitivity of Belgian firms and reduce the public finance deficit. In the near term, this macro-economic policy depressed the labour market still further, while the public finance cutbacks precluded the adoption of any costly remedies for unemployment.

Certain features of the initiatives launched during the 1980s can be understood against this political and economic background. They were largely the creation of the Minister of Employment, Mr Hansenne, whose competence does not include macro-economic employment policy; he is therefore obliged to seek indirect methods, such as training/work experience schemes, to combat unemployment. In addition, budgetary constraints require that these methods should not be costly, which excludes, for example, a programmed development of the national education system; this explains why many government initiatives have involved the provision of incentives to schools, firms, the two sides of industry, local authorities and social work associations.

Finally, it will be understood that it is particularly difficult to give an account of these initiatives. They are many and varied, frequently overlap and are in a constant state of evolution. It should also be noted that between a decision to offer an incentive and its application there may be a distance corresponding to that between intention and reality.

We shall now attempt to summarize, describing the plan finally adopted. The following will therefore involve simplifications - and consequently inaccuracies - as is inevitable in this type of presentation.

1. In 1983 compulsory education was extended from 14 to 18 years. Between the ages of 16 and 18, however, this obligation could be met by part-time tuition. This implied firstly the establishment of suitable training centres and secondly the organization of an industrial apprenticeship scheme.

In 1987 the training/work experience scheme was launched (Royal Decree 495).

2. The Government compelled the two sides of industry to conclude collective agreements comprising measures to promote employment and training. Most recently, the 1987-88 inter-trade agreement specified that 0.5% of the gross wage bill should be devoted to employment and training for young people. Various initiatives of this kind have been launched at sectoral level.

3. At the same time, social workers were developing original initiatives aimed at finding solutions to the problem of social exclusion. As more and more people, including young people, became eligible for benefits under the minimum guaranteed income ("minimex") provisions, the CPAS (Social Welfare Centres) began to concern themselves with employment and training. In this respect, the King Baudouin Foundation played a significant role.

1. Training/work experience schemes for young people

Before 1983 there existed only one scheme of this kind, aimed specifically at young school leavers: apprenticeships in the small business sector, referred to in Chapter I, of which the scope was limited to occupations in the crafts and commerce. Apprentices were assigned to self-employed tradesmen or small businesses.

The industrial apprenticeship scheme is an extension of this system; its establishment was made necessary by the prolongation of compulsory education to age 18, even though this obligation could be met by other means.

1.1 Three measures introduced in 1983

a. Compulsory education extended to age 18

The school-leaving age, which had been fixed at 14 years, was raised to age 18 at one stroke by the law of 29 June 1983. However, from age 16 onwards (or 15 if at this age the pupil had already completed the first two years of secondary education), full-time tuition was no longer required. Two alternative possibilities were offered:

- to continue education on a part-time basis in the training centres to be established (see point b. below)
- to follow a vocational training course recognized by the national education authorities in conjunction with the linguistic communities.

Recognition was quickly granted to training organized by the Institut de Formation des Classes Moyennes (Training Institute for the Small Business Sector), which was accorded subsidies for this purpose, and to the industrial apprenticeships which were to be set up (see point c. below). Certain training activities by youth organizations or adult education bodies could also obtain recognition.

b. The establishment of part-time training centres (CEHR)

Under a series of Royal Decrees, part-time training centres were set up in each of the two (or three) linguistic communities. Each centre is formed by a group of full-time secondary schools offering technical and/or vocational training, one of which provides the centre's premises. The Decrees fixed the number of centres which may be opened in each of the linguistic community networks. Attendance at one of these centres entails no obligation regarding the use of the remaining time. CEHR trainees may be simply part-time students or registered as part-time unemployed (benefiting form the tide-over allowance if they have completed a lower level course), part-time workers, ONEM trainees, or trainees under the industrial apprenticeship scheme.

In 1987, the age limit for CEHR trainees was raised from 18 to 25 to enable students to complete training begun earlier and also to permit the use of these centres in the context of employment training contracts (Royal Decree 495).

c. Introduction of industrial apprenticeships

The law introducing industrial apprenticeships (19 July 1983) coincided with the measure raising the school-leaving age to 18; however, the idea of industrial apprenticeships had been under discussion in the circles concerned for some time. Under the law of 24 July 1987, the scope of the apprenticeship system was broadened to include "salaried occupations" in both industry and the service sector. The law defined the terms of the new form of apprenticeship and called on both sides of industry to give effect to the scheme jointly at sectoral level.

Apprenticeships are governed by a fixed-term contract of from six months' to two years' duration. Contracts must be concluded before trainees reach the age of 18 (21 in certain cases). Apprenticeships

include both theoretical training, generally given in educational establishments, and practical training on the job. In respect of this latter, apprentices receive an allowance fixed under collective agreement: typically, it corresponds to a percentage of the salary payable for the job concerned at age 21; for example, 75% if the contract was concluded at age 16 (80% at 17, and so on) and then 80% after six months, 85% after a year, etc.

The employer benefits from virtually total exemption from social security contributions, while the recruitment of an apprentice counts towards the obligation to take on young trainees.

1.2 Application of the schemes

a. Industrial apprenticeships

At the beginning of 1988, the apprenticeship system was introduced in ten or so sub-sectors, with a view to taking on about a thousand young people. Three operations, covering 200 trainees, will be discussed under section 2. The rest concern very small numbers. On the French speaking side, only 155 apprenticeships were reported; however, projects in about 20 other sub-sectors are under preparation.

Table III.1 Industrial apprenticeships: numbers of participants[1]

Joint committees	Flemish community	French community	Total
Laundry	50		50
Structural and mechanical engineering	200	40	240
Chemicals	50		50
Foodstuffs	5		5
Textiles	225	50	275
Timber and furniture	25		25
Orthopedic footwear		4	4
Merchant Navy	50	50	100
Diamonds	215	10	225
Total	820	154	974

[1] Approximate figures, early 1988.

Assuming a volume of 1 000 apprentices over the whole year, the costs supported by the firms involved in the form of apprenticeship allowances would be between 120 and 190 million francs; say 150 million.[1]

The modest scale of these figures, five years following the introduction of the industrial apprenticeship system, is undoubtedly due to the cumbersome procedure involved. The organization of apprenticeships in occupations such as gunsmith-chaser, fitter-assembler, or spinner-setter is entrusted to the joint efforts of employers and trade unions. Joint apprenticeship committees, including representatives of the national education system from both linguistic communities, must be set up within the joint sectoral and sub-sectoral committees; this procedure requires a Royal or Ministerial Decree to determine, successively:

- the number of members of the committee
- the nomination of those members
- the designation of the representatives of the national education system
- the list of occupations in question
- finally, the amount of the allowances to be paid to the apprentices.

It is hardly possible to convene committees of this kind more than four times a year, even on the assumption that decisions will not be blocked by the absence of one or other representative.

However, it should also be pointed out that the relevant law establishes a legislative framework without obliging the sectors to act accordingly. This is this major point of difference with the German system, which is generally cited as a touchstone, since under the latter, firms which do not take on apprentices must nevertheless contribute to the financing of the system; this provision acts as a strong incentive.

It is also true that a new scheme of this kind requires a relatively long running-in period. It is believed in some quarters that with its extension to service sector occupations, the apprenticeship system will adopt a much higher "cruising speed".

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[1] The reference salary (100%) was assumed to be either BF 34 000 (corresponding to the SMIG - guaranteed minimum wage) or BF 40 000; the average rate of the allowance was assumed to be either 60% or 80%. The two lower assumptions give a figure of 122 million, while the higher figures give 192 million.

Others, such as A. Spineux et al.[1] are unhappy about the circumstances surrounding the introduction of this scheme. "An attempt was made to channel into training/work experience those young people who were unable to hold their ground in full-time education. This made the system unattractive from the outset" (page 23).

b. The part-time training centres (CEHR)

Even within the context of the national education system the Government refrained from organizing this new type of tuition directly. Royal Decrees fixed the number of CEHRs which could be opened by the various networks in the three linguistic communities. In the event, the official networks in the French community (State, provincial, local and mixed) had only opened 13 of the planned 23 CEHRs by 1986. The following table shows the numbers of students attending these centres in the French community.

Table III.2 Numbers of students attending CEHRs in the French-speaking community

School year	State	Provincial	Free	Total
1984-85	152	231	330	713
1985-86	170	254	543	967
1986-87	174	350	758	1 282

Source: A. Spineux et al., op. cit., p. 19.

The predominance of the free (catholic) network, in which the figures are also rising more rapidly, will be noted. The State network, on the other hand, has given the weakest response to the Government's incentive policy. However, these differences do not mask the salient feature: the very small numbers of students.

Figures given by the Fédération Nationale de l'Enseignement Catholique (National Federation for Catholic Education) indicate that 49% of the 1 282 students have no occupational activity parallel to

[1] A. Spineux et al., Nouvelles technologies, formation technique et professionnelle et marché du travail. Inst. des sciences du travail, Louvain-la-Neuve, 1987 (National research activities in support of the FAST programme).

their theoretical training in the centres; by contrast, 34% were following a non-remunerated training course (cited by A. Spineux et al., p. 20). This implies that the centres' links with the industrial apprenticeship scheme are extremely tenuous.

An article by J.P. Deliege and A. Tricot[1] provides details regarding the trainees in the French community CEHRs (though without indicating their origin). Their educational level appears to be very low: most have not completed lower secondary schooling, with high drop-out, failure and repeat rates. Their social background is essentially working class, with a high percentage of immigrants (over 50%) in the major towns. Their family background is frequently troubled, which is not unconnected with the number of cases of delinquency of varying seriousness (page 12).

c. Consequences of the prolongation of compulsory schooling

In view of the extremely modest development noted in both part-time education and industrial apprenticeships, it may be asked what has resulted from the prolongation of compulsory schooling to age 18. Even though enrolment rates rose sharply, they were well short of 100% between the ages of 15 and 18, as can be seen from the following table.

Table III.3 Enrolment rates: breakdown by age

Age	1970-71	1977-78	1982-83
15	79.0	86.7	92.5
16	66.2	76.9	84.2
17	52.7	63.4	68.1
18	38.9	46.9	46.2

Source: Eurostat, cited in A. Spineux et al., p. 11.

[1] J.P. Deliege and A. Tricot "L'offre de formation dans la Communauté française", Bulletin de la Fondation André Renard, No 166-167, July-October 1987, devoted to vocational training and continuing education.

While these figures, given the deficiencies of the Belgian statistical system, are subject to reservation, they suggest that the prolongation of compulsory schooling must have changed the behaviour of a susbtantial fraction of the population aged 15-18. Since the number of apprentices in the small business sector has fallen off to some extent, while the remaining possibilities for combined education and training concern only very small numbers of people,[1] it must be concluded that the main effect of the 1983 law was to retain young people in full-time education until the age of 18.

Essentially, the result was to swell the number of students in vocational training - hitherto the weakest section of secondary education. This is the conclusion reached in the study by A. Spineux, illustrated in the following table.

Table III.4 Boys in secondary education (French and German speaking)

Batch	1980-81		1985-86		Trend	
	number	%	number	%	number	%
General	96 565	57.8	102 484	56.5	+ 5 919	- 1.3
Technical	35 828	21.5	34 512	19.0	- 1 316	- 2.5
Vocational	34 515	20.7	44 217	24.4	+ 9 706	+ 3.7
Total	166.908	100.0	181 217	100.0	+ 14 309	+ 0.0

Source: A. Spineux, op. cit., p. 12.

The contraction in the technical education sector, both in absolute figures and as a proportion of the total, is striking since for students of working class origin it constitutes both the most accessible and the most favourable channel to employment. By contrast, former vocational training students are the worst-hit by unemployment, accounting for 35% of total youth unemployment in Wallonia in 1986 as against less than 20% ten years earlier.

[1] The Entreprises d'apprentissage professionnel (Training enterprises), which will be discussed in Section 3.

1.3 Training/work experience schemes for young people aged 18-25 (Royal Decree 495)

In 1987 the Minister of Labour introduced a new scheme enabling young people aged 18-25 to continue their training whilst working half-time. The measure is generally known by the number of the related Royal Decree (495) issued on 31 December 1986. Since the last of the series of Decrees necessary for its application was not issued until August 1987, the measure only entered into force in September of the same year.

a. The scheme

Unlike the industrial apprenticeship scheme, the measure is aimed at young people aged 18-25 - i.e., beyond the school-leaving age. Applicants must be unemployed and must not be holders of higher education qualifications (university or other).

Applicants must find an employer, with whom they must conclude a two-part contract:

- an open-ended part-time (which must be at least half-time) employment contract;
- an employment/training agreement, with a duration of from one to three years.

The part-time training must relate at least partly to the occupation exercised. The eligible types of training are specified in a Decree, as follows:

- within the school system: CEHR courses
  social advancement courses
  out-of-hours higher education courses
- ONEM courses
- training courses for heads of firms organized in the small business sector.

The employer benefits from temporary exemption from social security contributions.

b. Application of the scheme

In May 1988, some 215 young people were enrolled in the new scheme, of whom:

- 10 were to follow a CEHR course,
- 60 were recruited for experimental projects launched by two firms, Glaverbel (40) and Mestdagh (15),
- 145 followed the training for heads of firms organized by the small business sector.

The relative size of the latter figure may be found surprising. It relates to young people who have completed their apprenticeships and, to set up in business on their own account, must follow a training in business management, including a period of practical work. Decree 495 provides a legal framework for this period, according trainees the status of part-time employees.

2. Initiatives arising from concertation between the two sides of industry

By introducing the industrial apprenticeship scheme, broadening the apprenticeship system to cover all salaried occupations, and introducing employment/training contracts for young people aged over 18 (i.e., beyond the school-leaving age), the Government established a legal framework for schemes combining vocational training and work experience. Its utilization, however, called for demand from industry at a time when the labour market was in the throes of the second phase of the crisis, entailing a sharp contraction in private sector employment, which was down by 4% in 1981, followed by three years in which it fell by a further 3%, 2% and 1% respectively.

Apart from large-scale unemployment absorption programmes (CST, TCT, etc.) along the lines of the community work schemes (TUC in the French community), the Government's anti-unemployment policies, mainly

large-scale early retirement measures combined with an attempt to promote some degree of work sharing,[1] generally included mandatory provisions obliging firms to recruit young people. In 1988, for example, firms were obliged to take on 3% of young trainees and were liable to a fine of from BF 10 000 to BF 250 000 for every trainee not recruited. In return, trainees' salaries were reduced to 90% and broad exemption from social security contributions was granted.

However, the Government tried persuasion as well as coercion. While the wage freeze (in effect until 1986) limited the scope of collective bargaining, the Government urged employers and unions to conclude collective agreements - whether at sectoral, regional or firm level - comprising measures to promote employment. The inter-trade agreement of 7 November 1986, covering the years 1987 and 1988, includes the following provisions:

"The contracting parties hold the view that priority must be given to the promotion of employment in general and the employment of young people in particular.

To this effect the parties recommend to the sectors, in the context of their negotiations, to devote 0.5% of their gross wage bill to the afore-mentioned objective. The sectors shall determine the details of application of this measure, bearing in mind other considerations cited below".

2.1 The steps taken

In this sector, we shall describe some of the steps taken in Belgium to combat rising youth unemployment and the related training problems. Even though the principal cause of youth unemployment lies in the contraction in the volume of employment overall, it does

[1] Known as "5-3-3", this measure involves a 5% reduction in working time combined with the recruitment of 3% of additional workers and partial compensation (of the order of 3%) for the losses entailed by the reduction in working time.

not follow that at least partial remedies cannot be found by tackling the problem specifically or that no training problems exist. The Minister of Labour attempted to tackle the problem at macro-economic level: to do this, he had to persuade firms to take initiatives and he wanted the trade unions to support them. He therefore attempted to influence collective bargaining negotiations - traditionally a matter for the two sides of industry alone and conducted independently of the public authorities - in this sense.

The inter-trade agreement signed at the end of 1986 reflected this concern, citing the figure of 0.5% as we saw above. At inter-sectoral level, however, this is only a recommendation. The reference to "other concerns" acknowledges that the protagonists might be concerned about other matters such as increasing purchasing power after a long wage freeze accompanied by the partial de-indexation of pay levels. The problem was to prevent wage bargaining from over-shadowing considerations regarding employment and training.

A recommendation of this kind has to be incorporated in other texts and the latter given effect in practical terms; the task of evaluating the results is clearly not an easy one. The Ministry of Labour has analyzed agreements containing employment promotion provisions concluded in 161 joint sub-committees (up to March 1988); this does not, however, make possible an assessment of the actual results. In an interview with a major newspaper entitled "More than BF 3 000 million for youth unemployment and training in 1988", an FEB (employer's association) representative asserted that "On the most pessimistic assumption, which would only enable half our aims to be met, the expenditure involved for the benefit of young people would be of the order of BF 3 250 million" (Le Soir, 29 December 1987); i.e., a figure equalling about 80% of the ONEM's training budget.

In the absence of more precise estimates, the fact remains that this figure of 0.5% was at the heart of a four-month campaign designed to alert firms to youth employment and training problems launched by the FEB at the end of 1987 and summarized in a publication entitled 'Challenge J'. It may also be noted that one of the major trade union confederations (the Christian unions) has adopted as one of its priorities, with a view to a 1989-90 outline agreement, the expansion of vocational training for young people through an employers' contribution of the order of 0.2% of the wage bill.

The 26 cases described in 'Challenge J.' include two projects directed respectively by the two last presidents of the FEB; "We felt we had to begin to seek a solution", commented one of them. One of these projects is an industrial apprenticeship scheme and the other an application of Decree 495.

2.2 Some examples

a. Marginalized young people

The social conscience of the firms concerned is at the root of the most extensive project reviewed in this section. In the context of the "0.5% scheme", the textile sector decided to train 250 young people in 1987-88 and another 250 in the following year, recruiting them from among the most disadvantaged categories.

All the firms in the sector are contributing 0.2% of their gross wage bill, which will be used to pay trainees' allowances, grant a lump sum to the firms taking them on and cover CEFRET's organization costs. For this purpose, CEFRET has engaged three supplementary staff and selected 33 firms. The project falls within the framework of the industrial apprenticeship scheme, with part of the training being provided by the CEHRs.

Fears about shortages of skilled manpower were undoubtedly part of the background to these initiatives, despite the fall - and expected further fall - in the employment level and the scale of unemployment. However, it was also thought desirable to tackle the problem of the marginalization of young people for whom full-time schooling was no longer suitable. There are many such cases: nevertheless the textile industry has encountered difficulty in finding suitable candidates and on the date of the article's publication there were still 60 vacancies. This illustrates the intractability of this problem.

All the other examples cited of industrial apprenticeship or employment/training schemes (Decree 495) are on a much smaller scale. Shortages of skilled manpower for industrial occupations are often cited, especially as regards traditional trades which call for a lengthy apprenticeship (e.g., upholsterers in the Malines region). Training for these occupations no longer exists in the school system and with early retirement at 57 these skills are rapidly disappearing. Seven firms in the region, including a motor coach manufacturer, have set up a joint scheme to enrol young people aged 15-18 for an industrial apprenticeship operation (15 in the furniture sector and 23 in motor coach manufacture).

However, social concerns are also present. For example, the Solvay combine in the Charleroi region offers apprenticeships to the children of its personnel, who must be aged at least 18, unemployed and without qualifications; at the same time, on the open market Solvay had 24 000 applications for 1 100 vacancies offered in 1986.

b. The advanced training and work experience centres (CPE)

A longer standing project is that launched by Fabrimétal in Wallonia in the context of the obligation to recruit 1.5% of additional workers for two consecutive years. Fabrimétal thought it "valueless and artificial to take on personnel on a temporary basis where no need existed ... we obtained a concession under which firms which did not take on personnel could instead pay a contribution to a jointly-run non-profit-making association which would provide further

training to young unemployed workers who already possessed skills up to a certain level" (Challenge J., p. 63). The first centre of this kind was set up in Namur in 1983, and the scheme was later extended to other towns in the province of Hainaut. Up to now, 250 young people have been trained in these centres.

Training is organized in collaboration with the ONEM and generally lasts for one year, with one day per week in the centre and four days on the job. The programme is aimed at trainees aged 30 or under, who must hold a school-leaving certificate.

c. The tertiary sector

While the majority of the 26 cases described concern manual occupations in industry, five relate to occupations in banking, insurance, data-processing and the pharmaceutical laboratories sector, for which the training programmes concern intellectual workers.

The features observed during our investigations in Chapter II are also to be found here:

- human resource management policies, conducted at firm level and forming part of a strategy for the development of a "company spirit", employer/worker concertation being relegated to second place;
- the employment of various means to build up a reserve of selected personnel for potential recruitment, such as arranging for university students to undertake their end-of-course projects in the firm;
- a phenomenon of over-qualification: "Industrial engineers sometimes perform the tasks of A2 diploma holders, while the latter in turn perform the tasks of A3 holders, so that in the end, persons with low level qualifications cannot be recruited" (p. 103);
- an abundance of applications. For 524 vacancies throughout the country in 1986, the Banque Bruxelles Lambert received 12 000 applications in Brussels alone, while 1 786 candidates applied for the 50 university-level posts;

- these sectors are not concerned with industrial apprenticeship and probably not with apprenticeships in the white-collar occupations or employment training contracts (Decree 495);
- they are, however, affected by measures obliging firms to take on X% of trainees; but the latter can readily be absorbed in a context of expanding employment, enabling the firms to test their abilities at lower cost and dismiss them without difficulty if necessary.

It will clearly be seen that the question of vocational training takes on a completely different complexion in the tertiary sector world.

3. Social sector initiatives

Whatever the value of these various initiatives, not overlooking the possibility that with time some of them may attain a higher "cruising speed", we cannot fail to note the exceedingly modest numbers of persons concerned by these continuing training operations. In the face of massive under-employment, with at least 200 000 young people in difficulties, other bodies and institutions mobilized their resources with a view to taking whatever action they could.

3.1 Initiatives at regional level, promoted by the trade union movement

The four following projects have been launched in different regions of the French-speaking community:

- in Brussels, the DEFIS (Association pour le Développement, l'Emploi, la Formation et l'Insertion Sociale - Association for Development, Employment, Training and Social Integration);
- In Liege, the Canal Emploi, which operates in liaison with the regional radio and television centre;
- in Namur, the RTA (Radio Télévision Animation);
- in Charleroi, the FUNOC (Formation pour l'Université Ouverte), a training project for the Open University.

The schemes are aimed at marginalized young people, lacking education, not meeting the conditions for entitlement to unemployment benefit or a tide-over allowance and incapable of following a regular course of vocational training. When the EAP "1001 choses à faire" was first established in Liege, 10% of the young people concerned were former prisoners while 40% were receiving aid from the public welfare centres; in 1987, 500 applied but the EAP could only accept 14. This illustrates the intensity of the demand.

The EAP under discussion operates in the building sector. Others are active in widely varying sectors, e.g., horticulture, lumber, appliance repair, etc. They succeed in covering part of their expenses, the remainder being financed from various sources, including subsidies and gifts. A major difficulty in these projects is the need to provide intensive back-up.

3.3 The public social welfare centres (CPAS)

The deteriorating situation has led to the emergence of the "new poverty" phenomenon, resulting in a sharp rise in the volume of applications to the public social welfare centres. It is believed that in Wallonia, about 40% of the applicants are aged under 30.[1] Faced with this situation, the local authorities (to which the social welfare centres are responsible) took measures to promote the training and employment of young people.

For example, the Mayor of St Gilles (Brussels), who is also a Minister in the Executive of the French language community, is attempting to arrange about 50 employment/training agreements (under Decree 495) involving a lift company, various building firms and trainng operations for family helpers. In Uccle (Brussels), the Welfare Centre made contact

[1] Figures put forward in an interview with the secretary of the Charleroi Social Welfare Centre, published in Le Soir, 7 April 1988.

These projects were originated by the trade union movement, particularly the regional branches which - unlike the major centres - are traditionally responsible for problems of unemployment, training and local activities, and for marginalized groups. The catastrophic labour market situation, especially in Liege and Charleroi, entailing the marginalization of a growing proportion of the working population, called for measures to re-integrate the unemployed into social life and identify those elements of supplementary training which might enable them to find a job.

The projects were aimed at unemployed persons in the context of the unemployment absorption programmes (CST, TCT, etc.), and obtained subsidies from the French-speaking community and the European Social Fund; certain agreements were concluded with the ONEM and the authorities responsible for social advancement training. This adds up to a somewhat precarious form of continuing training; the annual financing procedure, with its uncertainty about renewals, constitutes a serious handicap, adding considerably to the problems involved in managing projects of this kind - already no easy task.

3.2 The Entreprises d'apprentissage professionnel (Training Enterprises) (EAP)

This is an original idea; it involves setting up businesses which produce and sell goods or services but have as their main objective the social and vocational reintegration of "deprived young people who have no future if society continues to ignore them".[1]

A number of projects of this kind appear to have been set up fairly recently, with spontaneous backing from various sources. Through the efforts of the King Baudouin Foundation combined with social concertation within the French-speaking community, they were given official status in 1987.

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[1] In the words of the 1987 Report of the non-profit-making body "1001 choses à faire" (1 001 things to be done).

with a firm engaged in urban renewal operations; in this case, the salaries of the young trainees will be paid by the centre, thanks to a subsidy from the European Social Fund.

Here too, the King Baudouin Foundation has attempted to act as catalyst. At the end of 1987, the Foundation published a paper[1] outlining scenarios - which may well correspond to contemporary reality - suggesting a substantial shift in the context of vocational training. At one level, training is discussed in the context of poverty, the guaranteed minimum income and local authority aid, while at another it is discussed in terms of patronage by industry, with firms sponsoring training projects designed to enhance their image. All this is a far cry from the world of national education, the right to work and concertation between the two sides of industry.

[1] Au travail. C.P.A.S. et insertion socio-professionelle. Clés et scénarios du possible.

CHAPTER IV AN EXPLORATORY REPORT

Before concluding this study, it may be as well to recall its nature. The author was entrusted with the exploration - in a short space of time - of a territory as vast and unknown as the Congo in 1900. The promoters can only wait for the explorer to return and describe his impressions: on the basis of what he saw, how does the situation appear to him and what should be done about it? The conclusions of ths study, then, are merely impressions conditioned by the paucity of the available information and the author's subjective approach.

1. The limits of the study

1.1 The areas explored

(a) One area - continuing training in the public sector - was not examined.

(b) Vast areas were surveyed very rapidly: our examination of six industrial and service sectors was no more than a brief sounding of the training activities conducted at firm and sectoral level.

(c) Some areas surveyed took the form of patchworks, typically made up of projects developed spontaneously in the fight against social exclusion; many projects of this kind had to remain outside the field covered by this study.

1.2 The quality of the available information

The quality of the information gathered differs greatly from one region to another; sometimes exhaustive data were supplied by the bodies concerned, while in other cases only overall estimates or fragments of information were available.

Another problem is that even if it were possible to quantify the flow of trainees and the associated financial consequences, this information would still be insufficient to evaluate the efforts made in relation to needs in quantitative and qualitative terms. Training statistics do not provide a measure of real demand, but at best only of perceived demand. To assess the degree of correspondence between supply of and demand for training - which in the nature of things can be neither perfect nor maximal, but only optimal - an evaluation procedure and, in particular, judiciously chosen criteria, would be necessary.

The logic of the foregoing argument should be stressed, since it conditions the scope of this report.

For example, we noted above that the ONEM's training budget is declining in real terms while the unit cost per person trained has been falling strongly and continuously since 1980 (up to 1986, the last year for which data are available). If these figures are correct, they point to a change in policy. This does not necessarily imply that the change was injudicious; nevertheless, the data have revealed a fact which at the very least calls for evaluation.

Let us now examine a different example, which is probably very characteristic of the Belgian system. In the fight to prevent the social exclusion of young - and less young - people, we noted a steady shift in the level at which action was taken: the prolongation of compulsory schooling primarily concerned the national education system, but then the Minister of Labour brought pressure to bear on the two sides of industry; subsequently, measures were taken within the context of social welfare, including public assistance projects at local level with sponsorship from industry. Decentralized action

of this type may be well adapted to dealing with the problem in question; or it may merely demonstrate the shortcomings of the political and administrative authorities. In the absence of an evaluation procedure and a consensus regarding the criteria to be applied, there is no means of knowing whether - under the circumstances - the optimum response has been given.

C. Maroy's doctoral thesis stresses the significance of the criteria adopted. If teachers are assigned the objective of achieving a high placement rate, they will tend to favour candidates who have the greatest chance of finding a job on completion of their training; it follows that priority will not be given to the most disadvantaged applicants.

Similarly, a study of likely scenarios for the years 1985-2000, directed by Professor G. De Landsheere,[1] illustrates the extent to which events in this field are determined by policy priorities, e.g., budget cuts; emphasis on competitivity in an elitist approach; equality of opportunity and the need to prevent the emergence of a "dual society", in a more democratic approach.

2. Four problem areas

Within the nebulous area of vocational training which particularly concerns continuing training or training/work experience schemes, we have been able to distinguish four main problem situations. This inventory is certainly by no means exhaustive but it serves to demonstrate that the problem is not a single, homogenous one. We shall now look at these four areas in turn.

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[1] G. De Landsheere, D. Delafontaine, A. Grisay and M. Orban, Enseignement et enseignants: Mutations et perspectives, Liege University, Pedagogics Laboratory, 1987 (National research activities in support of the FAST programme).

2.1 Social exclusion among the young and the not so young

Everyone knows what this means and the wide variety of projects undertaken shows that awareness of the problem is developing. Since 1985, employment in Belgian manufacturing industry has been contracting at a rate similar to that of the secular downtrend in agricultural employment; and as the media never cease to point out, this process is not yet at an end. For better or worse, the majority of young people of working class origin used to enter industry; however, one of the consequences of the decline in the employment level has been a drastic cut-back in recruitment. This situation has now continued for more than ten years, with the result that a substantial proportion of working class young people - among them the least well educated - are locked into unemployment, which has become a form of social exclusion.

When the demand for labour picks up again, these young - and less young - people are in danger of being left on the sidelines. It is essential to provide vocational training for them - and it cannot take the traditional form. What is required is some form of continuing training, if possible linked to an occupational activity, which can if necessary, be followed immediately after their schooling (or lack of it).

2.2 Skilled labour shortages

The complaints voiced in industry regarding shortages of skilled workers - especially in respect of trades quite unconnected with the new technologies - may be found surprising. Shortages of workers to fill blue-collar jobs, particularly in traditional occupations, were reported in a number of industrial sectors. This phenomenon is remarkable when it is recalled that the employment level in industry has fallen by 30% - blue-collar occupations being the worst affected - and that, as we are told unceasingly, the new technologies require

new and advanced skills.

Of course, taking an historical perspective, complaints of skilled labour shortages are by no means new, especially in boom periods; and despite the lengthy depression on the labour market, this year there are signs of a recovery. It appears to us that this question should be taken seriously, therefore.

The side effects of the crisis may bring about a paradox: early retirement measures[1] have been widely adopted for industrial workers, causing an accelerated wastage of human capital and affecting its natural rate of reproduction through training on the job. At the same time, the expected fall in recruitment rates has curbed training activities. Where firms or sectors are in difficulty, young people are discouraged from entering training channels oriented towards those sectors. Unemployment appears to contain an element of "hysteresis" (i.e., once it exists, the phenomenon tends to persist in the absence of its original causes); in the same way, as a result of the crisis the vocational training system may have lost its momentum, becoming trapped in a vicious circle. Massive unemployment no longer corresponds to a reserve of manpower.

The problem becomes acute when a firm sees a recovery in the demand for its product; it then has an immediate need for a specific skill requiring a lengthy training which is often very dependent on the firms in the sector, since it is largely given on the job. At the same time, the appropriate training channel in the schools has dried up in response to the signal given earlier by the firms' situation, as we saw above.

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[1] Before the crisis, the greater part of the male population in the 60-64 age group was at work: the activity rate, which was 68% in 1974, had fallen to 36% by 1983. Even in the 55-59 age group, it fell from 83% to 71% over the same period. This decline in the activity rate represents a reduction in the workforce corresponding to about 8% of the total working population (all ages, both sexes) in 1985.

The demand for skills is normally met both by schools and specific training centres, in addition to the firms themselves; however, the gaps to be filled in the present situation call for intensified continuing training or training/work experience measures.

There is also a need for reliable information. We were struck by the inadequacy of the information system in a number of sectors: superficial surveys, rudimentary statistical forecasts, etc. Regular and detailed information is the more necessary in that information appears to influence behaviour, in educational guidance especially; the information taken into account by young people evidently did not possess these properties.

Thus, training for traditional manual occupations (although probably including some tuition relating to the new technologies and elements of multi-skill training) appears to us to be the second problem area. A solution covering both this area and the first - the marginalization of young people - would of course be highly desirable, but it has to be recognized that the two areas are distinct; in any attempt to solve the second problem rapidly, priority could not be given to the hard core of marginalized young people.

2.3 The tertiary sector: "hierarchical under-employment"

The reverse of the paradox noted in the industrial sector is to be found in the services. Broadly speaking, employment in the services has continued to rise since the crisis but here, this growing demand for labour does not seem to have run into a shortage of supply. On the contrary, the number of applicants often exceeds the number of vacancies by a factor of ten. In accordance with the hierarchical model of the labour market,[1] we saw indications of a "staircase

[1] Developed, for example, in Chapter 6 of R. Leroy, Un scénario égalitaire. La distribution des revenus en perspective. Louvain-la-Neuve, Ciaco 1983.

mechanism": for example, university graduates eagerly apply for posts which would not normally call for their level of qualification.

Our investigation, conducted at sectoral and firm level, yielded little information about potential training problems in these expanding sectors since firms appear to experience no recruitment difficulties, while the major enterprises, after selecting their candidates, integrate training into an active human resource management policy in which training forms part of the development of a company spirit. However, this tells us nothing about the problems of those outside the system, those inside but under-qualified, or those in danger of redundancy as a result of re-structuring measures or closures of firms or establishments.

We shall confine ourselves to two comments concerning the lower or middle levels of the hierarchy of tertiary sector occupations - the white-collar occupations, which are in the majority in a number of sectors such as banking or insurance. This category is also taken to include all the technical, managerial or information processing occupations which are developing in this industry (the statistical classifications are often inadequate).

Our first comment directly concerns schooling. It is now evident that the major banks will not consider applications from candidates who have not successfully completed secondary education (a six-year course normally running from age 12 to age 18). At the same time, in industry and/or the manual occupations, technical training has become the norm: "most industries and the greater part of the tertiary sector ... no longer recruit applicants from the vocational schools".[1]

In the light of these developments, we may recall the trends observed among secondary-school pupils from 1980 to 1985: the proportion

[1] From an interview with an FEB representative in Le Soir, 2-3 July 1988.

of students in vocational training had risen, at the expense of general - and still more of technical - education. This striking contrast raises questions about the education "system" in the French linguistic community.

The second comment can be no more than conjecture, in the absence of adequate information. In this area, which is neither that of young marginalized people (the first area), nor that of the traditional industrial occupations (the second), nor that of the very highly qualified (that will be the fourth area), are there any problems? If so, what are they? And what forms of continuing training are called for?

We suspect the existence of large-scale under-employment - this expression being understood to mean staff occupying posts for which they are over-qualified. However, an in-depth study would be required to determine this. It should be noted that over-qualification at the start of a candidate's career, regrettable though it may be, is not necessarily a disadvantage for his future, assuming that possibilities for advancement exist. Similarly, a job which at first sight is far removed from the subject studied is not automatically a bad thing.

We also suspect that a proportion of the existing unemployed would not be unemployed if they had continued their studies or followed other studies.

Finally, the job losses which may result from the introduction of new technologies and competition intensified by the opening of a small economy to international markets are to be feared. In the absence of any reliable data, this question can only be mentioned in passing. If this fear should be realized, the situation would call for an intensive development of continuing training activities to facilitate mobility, especially for those with intermediate-level skills; this category would probably be the worst affected, since often they possess very specific skills which are not readily transferable.

2.4 High-level qualifications

The opening of national economic frontiers in the era of the new technologies (understood in the broad sense) will increase the geographical mobility of "young and dynamic executives" and technicians of international reputation. For the more competitive, this mobility will be welcome, offering prospects of higher pay. In Belgium, however, the question which arises is whether the education system is producing an adequate supply at this level.

A statistical series on the proportion of young people aged around 18-20 who enter higher education gives rise to doubt. Taking university and similar studies together with higher non-university education (shorter courses), the enrolment rate has been rising steadily. However, if we look at university and equivalent faculty enrolments alone, we arrive at the following results:[1]

- a strong and steady up-trend until 1972,
- an abrupt levelling-off from the start of the 1972-73 academic year, followed by stagnation for the next ten years,
- a renewed uptrend from 1983-84.

Leaving aside the difficulty of explaining these swings in behaviour patterns, it may be asked whether this period of stagnation may have been a negative factor. It can readily be understood that uncertainties on the labour market together with cuts in university staff and research budgets may have prompted young people in many cases to choose shorter courses which were in appearance more directly job-related; but this may have had a negative influence on the factors of development. The question should be asked, even though in this case the problem concerns the traditional forms of education rather than continuing training.

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[1] Data acquired progressively (given the pitfalls of the Belgian statistical system) from four bachelor's degree dissertations submitted at the Universities of Louvain-la-Neuve and Namur.

Adopting a quite different approach, a recent econometric study[1] reaches the same disquieting conclusion. Examining Belgium's strongest export sectors (by comparison with other countries), the study shows, surprisingly, that these sectors are the least intensive in terms of "human capital": i.e., the proportion of white-collar workers - or to be more precise "scientific, managerial and technical" personnel - in these sectors is the lowest. On the basis of the standard theory of international commerce, according to which countries specialize in those activities for which they are particularly rich in the related factors of production, it must be concluded that Beligum is poor in "human capital". The authors lean rather towards the view that policies in Belgium have tended - mistakenly - to favour investment in physical assets, entailing the danger that the development of "human capital" will steadily fall behind.

2.5 Limitations of this preliminary survey

We should like to stress two aspects of this preliminary survey.

Firstly, it is certainly not exhaustive: for example, no mention is made of specific and very important areas such as instructor training. Certain target groups, such as older people - both under and over the normal retirement age - and women are neglected. The study also takes no account of the incidence of certain major factors such as demographic trends. However, our objective was rather to stress the diversity of the problem of continuing training and identify problem areas.

Our conclusions in this respect must nevertheless be treated with reserve. An in-depth study, going beyond the scope of this survey, might call them in question. We doubt, however, whether it would invalidate the two general impressions set out below.

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[1] P.K.M. Tharakan and J. Waelbroeck, "Has human capital become a scarce factor in Belgium?" Cahiers économiques de Bruxelles, second quarter 1988.

3. What is to be done?

3.1 Two inter-dependent impressions

This survey of vocational training cannot legitimately engender an evaluation of the Belgian system in the technical sense.[1] On the other hand, it gives rise to a strong impression that the existing situation leaves much to be desired and that the Belgian system lacks the capacity adequately to confront what appear to be the country's future needs.

This assertion is an incautious one since the data required to support and refine it are lacking. This brings us to our second impression: Belgium has no adequate information system in this field. A system of this kind is indispensable for adequate problem diagnosis (and still more so for improving the education system).

We have twice used the term "system". In a report commissioned by the French Govenrment,[2] J. Lesourne uses the term "education system", recalling that a sytem is defined as "a group of interlocking elements, capable, through interaction with its environment, of responding to needs, evolving, learning and organizing itself" (p. 12). The Belgian system appears to be feeble in these respects, both as regards continuing training practice and as regards knowledge of what is being done and what ought to be done.

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[1] See, for example, E. Monnier, Evaluations de l'action des pouvoirs publics. Paris: Economica 1988.

[2] J. lesourne, Education et société. Les défis de l'an 2000, Paris, La Découverte, Le Monde, 1988.

While the King Baudouin Foundation is giving expression to a widely-held view in calling for an "educational project" (p. 6 of the report by the French-speaking group), it seems to us impossible to frame a sound project of this kind whilst Beligum does not possess an information system adapted to the nature of the problem and the current situation in the country.

3.2 The need for specific information

a. The nature of the problem

The continuing training sector has specific features. Firstly, it is a fairly new field and has not yet been mapped out in the same way as areas of study such as the working population or pay levels. Secondly, continuing training has to develop on the fringes of major institutions such as the national education system; by its very nature, it is a widely dispersed and heterogenous phenomenon. Thirdly, it concerns the vocational - i.e. qualitative - aspect of the labour market and calls for precise skill classification (in this respect, the failure of attemps to establish an occupational nomenclature will be recalled).

In view of the foregoing, the data required cannot immediately take the form of conventional statistical series comparable at international level. First, studies would have to be made, specific information collected, pilot projects set up (at sectoral level, for example), experiments conducted, etc., in respect of both the flow of trainees and the financial consequences.

b. The national situation

After these general observations, the Belgian national situation should be considered. On many occasions we noted the extent to which

decision-making and power of initiative were out of the hands of the central authorities. To obtain satisfactory results from a system so lacking in central control, the minimum requirement is that decentralized measures should be interrelated; i.e., when a project is proposed, its sponsors should at least know what others have already done and what no-one has yet done, while the public authorities, when granting subsidies, should have the same information at their disposal.

Unhappily, however, in Belgium decentralization is accompanied by fragmentation, compartmentalization and isolation. In particular, the trickle of research projects still under way despite drastic budget cuts are totally uncoordinated: one starts what another has already begun; for lack of funds, both are abandoned prematurely and the results are set out in little-known publications. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that potential users are unaware of them.

If this analysis is correct, our first priority is clear. If resources become available for the improvement of the information system in the field of continuing training, the most effective way to use them would be - rather than devoting them to the production of an overall statistical series or financing a particular study - to establish a nucleus to coordinate - and receive feedback from - a network.

3.3 Mixed training research centres

This is not the place to enter into the details of this proposal; we shall confine ourselves to stressing the desirability of integrating it into Community policy.

The structural changes brought about by the 1992 internal market will call for supporting measures as regards both labour markets and training. An effective continuing training system will be an element of the European social dimension, as is social security in relation to the risks of sickness or unemployment or the need for financial security on the part of pensioners and families.

A policy of this kind will not readily take root: the right to continuing training cannot be laid down by decree. Experiments will have to be made, errors evaluated, comparisons made at international level, achievements publicized and needs detected - or better still, anticipated. To achieve this, sophisticated and flexible machinery will have to be created.

Institutionalized cooperation between a European centre and a series of national centres, the latter being operated and financed jointly by the European and national authorities, would constitute a dynamic element of the European social dimension.

For the European body, each national centre would be a "sending" and "receiving" station. Significant and reliable data could be collected in view of the permanent national links established by the European centre. Conversely, Community directives would benefit from the existence of a network for their dissemination, ensuring that they were not simply ignored.

Interlinking at European level could prove to be a major advantage for countries wishing to participate in the network and contribute financially - especially those experiencing the type of problems from which Belgium is suffering at present. In a small country divided into two linguistic communities (and still further divided within those communities), insitutionalized participation by international experts would promote internal coordination, stimulate an improvement in technical and academic standards in education and favour the international mobility (in both directions) of research workers and administrators, thwarting the ingrained customs of spreading subsidies thinly and widely and the political hijacking or oligopolistic sharing-out of already meagre resources.

At national level the centre's first task will be to put the persons concerned - i.e., vocational training organizers and students - those in need of training and those who are, or should be, able to provide it - in contact. Once the network has begun to operate, the programmes will begin to take shape. Gradually the network will acquire a nucleus.

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Robert Leroy

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